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LECTURES ON THEOLOGY.

BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN DICK, D.D.

MINISTER OF THE UNITED ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION, GREYFRIARS, GLASGOW, AND PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY TO THE UNITED SESSION CHURCH.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF HIS SON.

WITH A

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION,

BY AN AMERICAN EDITOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

The author of the following Lectures left behind him neither Preface nor Introduction thereto. Hence it is inferred that he did not contemplate their publication. To those who had heard them read in the theological hall, they seemed a treasure too precious to lie buried amid the waste paper of the author's study-room. In 1834, they were presented to the world in three volumes, from the Edinburgh press, and recently an edition has been issued in two volumes in Philadelphia. A brief sketch of Doctor Dick's life and writings is given for the information of the American Reader.

The Rev. John Dick, D. D., was born on the 10th of October, 1764, in Aberdeen, Scotland. His father, for thirty-four years, the pastor of a secession church in that city, though not distinguished for brilliancy of talents, or varied and extensive literary acquirements, was a man of exemplary piety, untiring application to the duties of his office, and great purity of life. His mother possessed a vigorous, discriminating and cultivated mind. To her kind and judicious attention he was deeply indebted for his early moral and religious education, and he ever cherished her memory with enthusiastic affection. He devoted himself so sedulously to learning while in a grammar school, that upon his admission into the university of his native city, in his twelfth year, he gained a bursary, or the prize of a scholarship, by his proficiency in the latin language. His progress during his collegiate years fully satisfied the high expectations which his early attainments had excited. He outstripped, by a lengthening distance, most of his compeers, and was a favorite of all the professors. In 1780, immediately after the completion of his course in the university, he commenced the study of Theology under the care of the Rev. John Brown, of Haddington, and in 1785 was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline.

Of the events of his ministerial life our space will allow us to state only, that in 1786 he became the pastor of a church in Slateford, a village near Edinburgh—that during his residence in that place he twice received and declined an invitation to settle in the Church in Aberdeen, which his father's death had left vacant in 1793—that in 1801 he was translated to the important church of Greyfriars, in Glasgow—that his high reputation on this side of the Atlantic procured him, in 1815, the degree of D. D. from Nassau Hall in New Jersey—that in 1819, at the death of Dr. Lawson, Professor of systematic theology in the secession theological seminary in Scotland, he was chosen his successor, and that he continued to discharge the duties of that office, and also those of the pastor of Greyfriars church till his death. On the 23d of January, 1833, he addressed, in a lengthy and animated speech, a large meeting which was held in Glasgow for the purpose of petitioning parliament to adopt certain resolutions relative to the sanctification of the Sabbath. After his return home he complained of an ear ache, and passed a sleepless night. He rose next morning about 10 o'clock. The Lord's supper was to be administered in his church on the next Sabbath, and he spent a short time in committing to memory a discourse prepared for the occasion, from the text, "The Father loveth the Son and hath committed all things into his hands." About noon he took a chill. Medical aid being then obtained, copious bleeding was used with apparent success, and he conversed freely and cheerfully with his friends till 5 o'clock, when he sunk into a lethargy, in which state he continued until his death the next day. A suppuration had taken place in the ear, and the matter had been discharged

upon the brain, and produced inflammation and effusion. Thus suddenly was he removed from the earthly to the heavenly sanctuary. The garment of mortality easily dropped off, and he entered into the joy of his Lord. Long will he be remembered by those to whom he has spoken the word of God.

In the nearest relations of private life, as a son, brother, husband, and father, Dr. Dick's character was eminently lovely. His manners were characterized by grace and dignity, yet remarkably unostentatious. There was about them no distance, no reserve, no visible consciousness of superiority. Deeply impressed with the truth that *the priest's lips should keep knowledge*, he seldom preached without having previously written and memorized his discourses. In the desk he aimed at testifying the whole counsel of the grace of God and rightly dividing to every man the word of truth. In the performance of the private duties of his office, visiting the sick, and teaching from house to house, he was laboriously diligent. As a theological professor, he taught and governed with unusual success. Few of his cotemporaries possessed equally extensive stores of biblical and classical knowledge. All these he judiciously applied to the illumination of the scripture, and the instruction of his class. By his students he was venerated as a teacher and loved as a man. In the language of Shakspeare, he grappled them to his soul with hooks of iron.

His published works, omitting a few single discourses, are *An Essay on Inspiration; Lectures on select portions of the Acts of the Apostles;* and *Lectures on Theology*. The last mentioned were read by their author in the discharge of his professional functions, and embody the substance of his Essay on Inspiration, and the peculiar views on church government which he advanced in his Lectures on the Acts.

After the recommendations of the work already submitted to the public, the publisher would only say, that at a period when Romanism is striking deep its roots in our country, and the theology of the Protestant churches is becoming infected with Pelagianism, he believes its publication to be an important service to the religious community.

LECTURES ON THEOLOGY.

LECTURE I.

ON THEOLOGY.

Introductory Observations—Theology defined : Its Object and Importance—Natural Theology—Supernatural Theology : Its Divisions into didactic, polemic, and practical—Qualifications of a Student of Theology : Piety, a competent Share of natural Talents and Learning, and a Love of Truth.

Theology embraces a great variety of topics, some of which are abstruse and difficult, and all have been perplexed by controversies, which commenced as soon as our religion was promulgated, and have been carried on from age to age, with all the arguments which ingenuity and learning could supply. It is like an immense field, thickly covered with briers and thorns, which impede our progress, and through which we must force our way with toil and pain, in the pursuit of truth. The private Christian, ignorant of the subtle disputes which have arisen concerning almost every article of faith, humbly takes up the Bible as the Word of God, and by a short and easy process, acquires that measure of knowledge which, through the teaching of the Divine Spirit, makes him wise unto salvation. But the minister of religion proceeds more slowly, encounters obstacles at every step, and often is compelled to assume the character of a polemic, because he must study theology as a science, and be able not only to instruct the simple and illiterate, but also to contend with the wise and learned, whether as infidels they oppose revelation in general, or as heretics they impugn any of its doctrines. To superintend and assist your studies in a subject so extensive, so complicated, and so embarrassed with difficulties, is a task which I should not have willingly undertaken: but as it has been imposed upon me for a time, I must attempt to perform it, although I know beforehand, that I shall neither do justice to you, nor give satisfaction to myself. I commit myself and you to the Father of lights, from whom comes down every good and perfect gift,—earnestly beseeching him to prevent me from handling his word deceitfully, or in any instance misleading your minds, and to bless such instructions as you may receive, for advancing your progress in divine knowledge and in personal religion.

There are various departments of human knowledge, to each of which a degree of value ought to be attached, according to its intrinsic worth, or its nearer or more remote connexion with our business and our interests. The objects of knowledge are, mind and matter; the sciences and the arts; man himself under his different aspects, as an animated being, as the subject of moral obligation, and as a member of civil society; the history of human opinions, inventions, and transactions; and many other particulars which it would be tedious to mention. To these, individuals are led to direct their attention, in some instances, it would seem, by a natural predilection or an original disposition of mind, by accidental circumstances, by imitation, by a regard to interest, by the love of glory, or by the principle of curiosity, which prompts us to inquire into what is unknown, and is gratified by the enlargement of our views. As man has been endowed by his Creator with intellectual powers, he acts conformably to his will when he exerts them in the acquisition of useful knowledge; and the knowledge which is thus acquired must be considered as a divine communication, not immediate, indeed, like the revelations which were made to the prophets, but proceeding as certainly from the Father of lights. Whatever blessing is obtained by the use of means with which Providence has furnished us, is as truly a gift of our Maker as was the manna which, being prepared by his own hand without, as far as we know, the intervention of any natural cause, fell every night around the camp of the Israelites. I do not therefore mean to undervalue those parts of knowledge to which I have referred, and which in their place are as necessary as revelation, when I add, that however worthy they are of attention, and however great are the advantages which they are calculated to impart, they yield in importance to the subject which alone will constitute the business of this course.

Theology literally signifies, a discourse concerning God. By the ancients, the term was used in a more restricted, and a more extended sense. In the writings of the Fathers, mention is made of the Theology of the Sacred Trinity, and of the Theology of the Son of God, or of the Divinity of our Saviour; while the word, at other times, denotes the general system of truth contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, or these Scriptures themselves. It may be defined to be the science which treats of God, his nature, his attributes, his counsels, his works, and his dispensations towards the human race. I call it a science, because it is equally worthy of that designation with any of those departments of knowledge to which it is applied by common consent; for, although its authentic records do not deliver theology in a scientific form, it is founded on first principles, from which its subordinate parts are deducible; and, throughout all its ramifications, there is a connexion, a mutual dependence, constituting a harmonious whole. Reflection upon the subject of theology will convince us that it claims the preference to all other studies. In God, we behold an assemblage of all conceivable excellencies, existing in the highest degree, and in the most perfect accordance; the union of grandeur and loveliness, of every thing fitted to awaken solemn and pleasing emotions, to impress us with veneration, to gain our confidence, to inspire us with hope. He is invisible to mortal eyes, but this is not a reason for suspending our inquiries, because we are furnished not only with external senses, by which we communicate with the material creation, but also with mental faculties, which qualify us for holding intercourse with the intellectual or spiritual world. The mystery which envelopes his nature might discourage us, if we entertained a presumptuous wish to comprehend his infinite essence; but it presents no obstacle to the attainment of that degree of knowledge which will serve as the foundation of religion, since he has

been pleased to grant such manifestations of himself as are suitable to our limited capacity and our present state of existence. His remoteness from us, who are separated from him by an interval of infinite extent, has been urged by some men as an argument for dismissing him from our thoughts, and confining them to subjects more nearly allied to us; but it will have no weight in the estimation of those who consider, that independent and self-existent as he is, he stands in the closest relations to us, as our Maker, our Lawgiver, and our Judge. To know this mighty Being, as far as he may be known, is the noblest aim of the human understanding; to love him, the most worthy exercise of our affections; and to serve him the most honourable and delightful purpose to which we can devote our time and talents. To ascertain the character of God in its aspect towards us; to contemplate the display of his attributes in his works and dispensations; to discover his designs towards man in his original and his present state; to learn our duty to him, the means of enjoying his favour, the hopes which we are authorized to entertain, and the wonderful expedient by which our fallen race is restored to purity and happiness; these are the objects of theology, and entitle it to be pronounced the first of all the sciences in dignity and importance. Ignorant of the other sciences, and of the arts which minister to the ornament and amusement of life, a man who can sustain himself by mechanical labour, may spend the short time of his earthly pilgrimage, not without comfort, nor without the honour which honesty and integrity may procure, especially if religion has shed some rays of its celestial light upon him; but he who has stored his mind with every kind of knowledge except the knowledge of God and divine things, lives, like a fool, and shall die without hope.

Theology may be distinguished into natural and supernatural. By natural theology, is understood that knowledge of God which the light of nature teaches, or which is acquired by our unassisted powers, by the exercise of reason, and the suggestions of conscience. It is not meant, that there is in the human mind an innate idea of God, a supposition manifestly absurd, and contradicted by experience, for individuals have been found in a savage state, in whom there was no such idea; but that man, by contemplating the objects around him, is led to infer the existence of an invisible Being by whom they were created, possessed of certain perfections, the signatures of which are perceived upon his works; and from this first principle deduces other doctrines of religion, as that this God governs the world; that it is our duty to honour and please him, by the practice of piety, and justice, and benevolence; that the soul is immortal; and that there is a future state, in which the righteous will be rewarded, and the wicked will be punished. These are the great articles of natural theology; and much reason and eloquence have been employed in illustrating them, and demonstrating their truth in opposition to the objections of atheists. Upon this subject, however, there is a diversity of sentiment. It has been disputed, not only whether these are the only articles, but also whether there is such a thing as natural theology; or, in other words, whether the system, which bears that name, is discoverable by unassisted reason. There is no doubt that its truths, when proposed, are approved by reason, which supplies the most convincing arguments in support of them; but the question is, whether men, left to themselves, could arrive, by the observation of external things and the reflections of their own minds, at the conclusion that there is one living and eternal Being who created and governs the world, and would connect with it the other doctrines in a regular series. The discussion of this controversy does not belong to this introductory lecture.

Supernatural theology is the system of religion which is contained in the Holy Scriptures; and it is called supernatural, because the knowledge of it is not derived from reason, but from divine revelation. It incorporates the truths which have been enumerated as the articles of natural theology; but it comprehends many other truths, which it could not have entered into the mind of man to conceive, and which exhibit new manifestations of the divine character, suitable to the new situation into which we have been brought by the fall. It is the religion of sinners, and consequently the only religion with which we are concerned. What is called natural religion, is not adapted to our circumstances. It holds out no hope to the guilty; and, in the present enfeebled and corrupt state of our moral powers, its duties are absolutely impracticable. Christianity has been said to be a republication of the law of nature. The assertion is true, if it only mean that it teaches the doctrines which are supposed to be discoverable by reason, and teaches them more clearly, and fully, and authoritatively; but it is obviously false to affirm, that this is the whole design of Christianity, the distinguishing character of which arises from its superadding to those doctrines the discovery of the remedial or mediatorial dispensation.

Christian theology may be arranged under three divisions, distinguished by the titles of dogmatic, or didactic, polemic, and practical.

It is the province of didactic theology to state and explain the several doctrines of religion, and to point out the proofs. In treating this part of the subject, the theologian proceeds in the same manner as a teacher of any other science, who lays before his pupils its constituent principles, and the conclusions which have been drawn from them, together with the train of reasoning upon which they are founded. Having examined the subject with attention and patience, and, as he trusts, with success, he imparts to others the result of his inquiries, to facilitate their progress, and to lead them to the same views which he has adopted from conviction. I will add, that it is his business, not only to bring forward the several doctrines of religion, and the proofs, but also to exhibit them in their order and connexion. It is granted, that the Scriptures do not deliver religion to us in that artificial form which we find in the writings of the schoolmen, and of those modern divines who have trodden in their steps, although there is certainly an approach to it in some parts of the Bible, particularly in the Epistle to the Romans; but no man, I think, who (is in possession of his senses, and) understands what he is saying, will deny that religion is systematic. The word of God is not an assemblage of writings which have no other relation to each other but juxtaposition, or collocation in the same volume, but a continued revelation of his eternal counsels, "in which he has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." There is arrangement here, as well as in his other works, although it may require time and patience to discover it. Religion, if I may speak so, has a beginning, a middle, and an end. It has first principles, and secondary truths derived from these principles, and precepts founded upon both. The study of the Scriptures is not recommended to us, that we may load our memories with a multitude of unconnected ideas, but that we may bring together and combine the truths which are scattered up and down in them, and thus "understand what the will of the Lord is." In the mind of every intelligent reader of the Scriptures, a system is formed, the parts of which, by their union, reflect a new light upon one another; and certainly, the utility of this system is not destroyed or diminished by its being committed to writing, or being communicated to others by oral instruction. I am at a loss to understand the declamations which are so common against systematic theology; and am disposed to think, that they are often as little understood by their authors, unless it be their design, as, in some

instances, we have reason to suspect, to expose to contempt a particular set of opinions, to cry down, for example, not the system of Socinus, or Arminius, but the system of Calvin. Were their objections pointed against a particular system, as improperly arranged, as too technical in its form, or as encumbered with a multiplicity of useless distinctions, we might concur with them, on finding the charge to be true. But to admit, as they must do, that religion is not a mass of incoherent opinions, but a series of truths harmonized by the wisdom of God, and, at the same time, to exclaim against its exhibition in a regular form, as an attempt to subject the oracles of Heaven to the rules of human wisdom, is conduct which ill befits men of judgment and learning, and is worthy of those, alone, who "know neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm."

In the department of polemic theology, the controversies are considered which have been agitated in the church, with respect to the doctrines, and precepts, and institutions of religion. The term is derived from a Greek word, which signifies *warlike*. A polemic divine is a warrior; he goes forth into the field to encounter the adversaries of the truth. The word has an odious sound, and seems to accord ill with the character of a teacher of religion, who ought to be a minister of peace. On this ground, polemic theology is often held up as the object of scorn and detestation, and it is loudly demanded, that the voice of controversy should be heard no more within the walls of the church, that the disciples of Christ should bury all their disputes in oblivion, and, without minding differences of opinion, should dwell together as brethren in unity. There is much simplicity and want of discernment in this proposal, when sincerely made. It is the suggestion of inconsiderate zeal for one object, overlooking another of at least equal importance, accounting truth nothing, and peace every thing, and imagining that there may be solid peace, although it does not rest upon the foundation of truth. Often, however, it is intended to conceal a sinister design, under the appearance of great liberality; a design to prevail upon one party to be quiet, while the other goes on to propagate its opinions without opposition. Every man who has observed from what quarter these cries for peace most frequently come, must have noticed that they are as insidious as the salutation of Joab to Amasa, whom he stabbed under the fifth rib when he took him by the beard, and said,—"Art thou in health, brother?* Nothing is more obvious, than that when the truth is attacked it ought to be defended; and as it would be base pusillanimity to yield it without a struggle to its adversaries, so it would be disgraceful, as well as criminal, in one of its professed guardians, not to be qualified to sustain the dignity of his office, and to uphold the sacred interests of religion, by his arguments and his eloquence. He should be "able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers." If controversial theology be accounted an evil, it is a necessary one; and let the blame be imputed to the men who have laboured, and are still labouring, to pervert the oracles of God, not to those whom a sense of duty has compelled to come forward, and defend them against the rude assaults of presumption and impiety.

Practical theology states and explains the duties which are enforced upon us in divine revelation. The way is prepared for it by the two preceding departments of the science, under which the doctrines are illustrated and vindicated, upon which these duties are founded, and which supply the only motives that will lead to the proper and acceptable performance of them. Some consider this as the only part of theology which is worthy of attention, speaking slightingly of faith, and pronouncing high panegyrics upon virtue as the one thing needful, and in doing so, they display much the same wisdom as a husbandman would show, who should think [illegible] of the produce of his fields, without concerning [illegible]self with the quality of the soil, and the means of calling forth its vegetative powers. By others, it is looked upon as of inferior importance; and they are apt to suspect those who are of a different opinion, of being perverted in their taste, and corrupted in their principles, and to accuse them of bestowing that admiration upon a cold and uninteresting morality, which should be reserved for the sublime mysteries of faith. Both are chargeable with mistaking a part for the whole, and disjoining what God has united; with forgetting that religion, in all its parts, is an emanation from the Fountain of wisdom and purity; and that it is alike necessary that its doctrines should be believed, and its duties should be practised. Religion is a barren speculation when it is treated merely as a theory. It should uniformly be represented as a practical system; the tendency of its doctrines to promote holiness of heart and life should be pointed out, and the nature of holiness explained, that men may know what are the good works which it is incumbent upon them, as the professed disciples of Christ, to maintain. "A scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," a minister who would declare all the counsel of God to the people under his charge, must be an able expounder of the law, as well as a zealous preacher of the gospel.

Theology is not one of those recondite subjects, which it is left to the curious to investigate, and in the contemplation of which, speculative and reflecting men may spend their hours of leisure and solitude. Its claim to universal attention is manifest from the succinct account which has now been given of its nature. Its instructions are addressed to persons of every description, to the learned, and to the unlearned, to the retired student, and him who is engaged in the bustling scenes of life. It is interesting to all, as furnishing the knowledge of God and his Son, which is the source of eternal life. But in your case, there is a particular reason, besides a regard to your personal welfare, why it should not only engage a share of your thoughts, but be made the principal object of your inquiries. Theology is your profession, as medicine, is that of a physician, and law of a barrister. It should be your ambition to excel in it, not, however, from the same motives which stimulate the diligence of the men of other professions, the desire of fame, or the prospect of gain, but with a view to the faithful and honourable discharge of the duties of the office with which you expect one day to be intrusted. "These men are the servants of the most High God, who shew unto us the way of salvation."

In the sequel of this lecture, I shall briefly point out the qualifications which are indispensably necessary to a student of theology.

The first which I shall mention is piety. I have called theology a science, but I did not mean to insinuate, that like the other sciences, it should be regarded merely as a subject of cold speculation and philosophical inquiry. As the conscience should be deeply impressed with the authority of God in this revelation of his will, so the heart should be affected by the views which it gives of Him and ourselves, and all its movements should be in unison with the manifestations of his character and attributes. While the student of theology is assiduously labouring to store his mind with knowledge which is to be communicated to others, it should be his first care to convert it by faith and prayer to his own use, that he may be nourished with the heavenly food which he is preparing for the household of God. If we are destitute of piety, we cannot enjoy the divine blessing on our studies; and although, by the exercise of our natural faculties, and the common assistance of Providence, we may acquire the knowledge of the Scriptures as well as of any other book, what will

*2 Sam. xx. 9.

it avail? It will minister no consolation to our minds and will serve to aggravate our guilt and condemnation for "the servant who knew his master's will and [illegible] not, shall be beaten with many stripes." The knowledge which we do attain will be superficial and only literal, for the unrenewed mind being incapable of discerning spiritual truths, and supernatural illumination being necessary to clear and impressive conceptions of doctrines, which reason is too dim-sighted to discover. We may think and speak of the wisdom and love of God in redemption, but we shall feel no holy admiration of the one, no animating and melting sense of the other. The want of piety may even prove an obstacle to the fairness and success of our speculative inquiries; for if our hearts remain under the influence of their innate enmity to God, we cannot cordially assent to those parts of the system which exalt him so highly, and degrade us so low; and we may be tempted, as others before us have been, to accommodate them to our prejudices, to mould them into a shape more pleasing to our taste, more accordant with our feelings. Those who indulge in perverse disputes, and resist the truth, are represented as "men of corrupt minds."* You ought therefore to begin, and to carry on your studies, with fervent prayer for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, who will lead you into all the truth, and fill you with joy and peace in believing. He who mingles humble and devout supplications with his studies, cannot fail to succeed.

But piety, although indispensably necessary, is not the only qualification. The study of theology demands, if not the powers of genius, yet certainly a competent portion of intellectual ability, a mind capable of attention and patient investigation, of distinguishing and combining, and of communicating the result of its inquiries by accurate arrangement, and perspicuous exposition. It is a strange and unfounded notion, that theology is an inferior study, and that those may succeed in it who are disqualified for any other profession. Irreligious men may think that the lame and the blind are offerings good enough for the altar of God, but his service is worthy of the noblest talents; and although the ministrations of weak men have been frequently blessed, while those of some others far superior to them have not been attended with equal success, yet there is no doubt, that upon the whole it has been by the labours of persons properly furnished for the work by nature and education, that the edification of the church and the general interests of religion have been chiefly promoted. The mention of education leads me to remark, that as a competent portion of natural talents is requisite to success in the study of theology, it is farther requisite that these should be improved by previous discipline. You know what are the preparatory studies which our church prescribes to those who are looking forward to the office of the ministry. Whether their time is employed in acquiring the knowledge of languages, or in cultivating the sciences, the object is not only to enlarge their stock of ideas, or to open the sources from which ideas may be derived, but to exercise and invigorate their faculties, and to form their minds to habits of reflection and inquiry. Individuals may sometimes be found, who have not enjoyed the advantages of a regular education, but are so eminently gifted by nature as to be able to perform, in a creditable manner, the duties of public teachers of religion. But such instances are rare; and nothing is more absurd, than upon the authority of a few extraordinary cases to establish a general rule. In general, an unlearned ministry will be neither respectable nor useful. The experiment was made some years ago in this country, but its success was not such as to encourage its patrons to persist in it long. They soon discovered the incompetency of illiterate preachers, and found it expedient, for the credit of their party, to furnish them with a portion of human learning, [illegible]h was once represented as useless and pernicious. It has been sagely asked, what need is there of Greek and Latin and philosophy, to qualify a man for proclaiming the good news of salvation? Why should he waste his time in schools and universities, where nothing is to be learned but the vain wisdom of the world? Let him take the Scriptures into his hand, and then declare to his fellow-sinners what he has read and believed. To these reasoners, or rather, declaimers, for of the crime of reasoning they are on this occasion guiltless, I would reply in the words of the prophet, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" Bring forth your self-taught haranguers, and place, in opposition to them, an equal number of preachers of man's making, as you sometimes call them, that we may judge of the utility or worthlessness of human learning, by the self-sufficient dogmatism, the enthusiastic rhapsodies, and the perpetual recurrence of a few favourite topics, on the one hand; and by the good sense, the lucid arrangement, and the varied illustration of truth, on the other. Learning, then, is necessary to the study of theology; and without its aid, our knowledge must be very incomplete. Can he be called a divine, whose accomplishments are little superior, if they be superior, to those of many pious mechanics; or can he expound the Scriptures, who is unable to consult them in the original languages, and is unacquainted with the histories, and laws, and manners, and opinions, to which they so often refer? In this view, it may be justly said, *philosophia theologiæ ancillatur*,—philosophy is the handmaid, although not the mistress, of theology. I conclude this topic, with a familiar scriptural allusion, for which we are probably indebted to Origen, the father of allegorical interpretation, who, recommending to his friend Gregory of Nazianzum the study of the Grecian philosophy as a means of preparing him for the study of the Christian religion, adds, that as the Israelites employed the spoils of Egypt in the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture, so we should consecrate our learning to the service of God.

I shall take notice only of another qualification, the love of truth, which is to be found in every mind imbued with piety. Whatever is the subject of inquiry, men are always desirous to discover the truth, unless it happen that error will be more soothing, or more conducive to their immediate interests; but here, it should be sought with greater diligence and care than in any of the sciences, on account of its superior value. The constant aim of a student of theology, must be to ascertain the mind of God in the Scriptures, by reading, and reflecting upon them. He should come to the study, not with a view to find out arguments in favour of the system which he may have been previously led to adopt, but to learn what is the system which has proceeded from the Father of lights by the ministry of his inspired messengers. I do not mean to concur with some (declaimers,) who would dissuade the student from having any recourse to human aid, and call upon him to make his own understanding his only resource, and to commence his inquiries as unprovided and as helpless as if not an individual had gone before him to point out the way. I do not so undervalue the labours of pious and learned men, who shine as lights in the firmament of the church; and I have little doubt, that nothing would be more mortifying to those declaimers, than our adopting their advice in its full extent, and treating their own writings with as little regard as they wish us to express for the writings of others. But I mean, that while we consult the opinions of others, we should remember that they are fallible, and in themselves of no authority; and that our ultimate appeal should be to the Scriptures, by which alone the question of truth and error can be decided in religion,

* 2 Sam. iii. 8.

Follow them whithersoever they shall lead you. Refuse not to follow them, although it should be necessary to part from those, whose dictates you have been hitherto accustomed to reverence as oracles. He who holds the office which I have undertaken must deliver a particular system, because it is the system of the church which has appointed him, and because he believes it to be true. He must say also, that if you will be ministers of that church, you must adopt her creed, because she allows no other to be taught to the people. But farther he has no right to proceed. He is not the lord of your faith. He does not claim to teach authoritatively, and, like Pythagoras, to substitute his own affirmations for wisdom. He calls upon you to inquire for yourselves, with earnest prayer for divine illumination, and to embrace the truth wherever you may find it. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

LECTURE II.

SOURCES OF THEOLOGY: REASON.

Sources of Theology, Reason and Revelation—Reason defined: Extent of its Discoveries respecting the Being and Attributes of God; Man's Relation to God; Creation; Providence; Morality; and the Immortality of the Soul—Reason insufficient to establish the Doctrines of natural Religion: totally silent respecting those of supernatural Religion—The just Office of Reason in Theology.

In the preceding lecture, I endeavoured to give you a general view of the nature of theology, and pointed out its superiority to every other subject of study. As it treats of God and divine things, of our duty and our hopes, it is equally interesting to the learned and the unlearned. I showed you that it is distinguished into natural, and supernatural or revealed theology; and that of the latter there are three divisions,—didactic, polemic, and practical theology. Didactic theology explains the doctrines of religion, and states the proofs, or the arguments by which their truth is evinced. Polemic theology considers the controversies respecting those doctrines, and replies to the objections of adversaries. It is the business of practical theology to point out the improvement which should be made of the doctrines, by detailing the duties incumbent upon those who profess to receive them as true, and the motives which they supply to the faithful performance of these duties. I concluded by laying before you some of the qualifications for the study of theology; and I mentioned piety, without which the study, if not unsuccessful, will certainly be unprofitable; a competent share of human learning, which is indispensably necessary to eminence in your profession; and the love of truth, or a sincere desire to know the will of God, leading to candour and diligence in your inquiries.

Let us now proceed to inquire what are the sources of theology; or, in others words, what are the sources from which our knowledge of it is derived. These are reason and revelation. Here our attention is demanded to such questions as these—Whether reason and revelation are both necessary? If only one, whether is it reason or revelation? and, lastly, if reason alone is insufficient, how far its discoveries extend, and what are its defects, which are supplied by revelation?

Reason signifies, in this place, the intellectual and moral faculties of man, exercised without any supernatural assistance in the investigation of religion. Whether under its guidance he can attain all the knowledge which is necessary to conduct him to virtue and happiness, is the great subject of controversy between infidels and Christians. There is another dispute, among Christians themselves, with respect to the degree of its ability; while some maintain that it can discover the doctrines of what is called natural religion, others affirm that these could not be known without the aid of revelation.

Nothing is more unphilosophical, and a more certain source of error, than to indulge in vague speculations and barren generalities upon any subject, when it is in our power to enter into a close investigation of it, and to bring it to the test of experience. It is easy to present to us a system of religion, containing a variety of articles supported by a train of arguments, which seem to amount to demonstration; and to tell us, that reason, being the gift of God, must be perfectly sufficient to direct men in all the parts of their duty; that religion being a general concern, they would not be responsible, unless they were all furnished with the means of acquiring the knowledge of it; that the supposition of supplementary means is a reflection upon the wisdom of God, as if he had not originally adapted man to his situation, and was hence compelled to devise a new expedient for correcting the error. Without examining these assertions one by one, and showing, which we might do, that they are mere gratuitous assumptions, it may suffice to observe, that not a single fact in the history of mankind can be adduced in confirmation of them. They are an Utopian description of an imaginary state, not a sober relation of things which really exist. They are *a priori* arguments, or arguments deduced from our own previous conceptions, not arguments, *a posteriori*, or founded on observation and experience. The question is not, what should be, according to our ideas of justice and fitness, but what actually is; not what purposes reason, abstractly considered, may be presumed to accomplish, but what purposes reason, as existing in men, is found to have actually accomplished. It is preposterous, first to give an arbitrary definition of reason, and then to conclude that it is capable of exerting all the power which we have been pleased to ascribe to it; it is more consonant to sound philosophy, to judge of the power of reason by its effects. In a word, we must not waste our time, and impose upon ourselves, by endeavouring to show beforehand what reason can do; we ought to proceed according to a different and a safer plan, and inquire what it has actually done.

It may be proper to remark, that there are two senses in which reason may be understood, and consequently, that what is true of it in one sense, may not be true in another. First, reason may signify the high intellectual ability with which man was endowed at his creation; and which we may conceive to have been as sufficient to direct him in his original state, as instinct is to direct the lower animals, both being perfect in their kind. I would not affirm, however, that even then reason was his only guide, because it appears from the sacred history that he lived in familiar intercourse with his Maker, and was favoured with occasional communications of his will. Secondly, reason may signify the intellectual powers of man in his present state, when he feels the effects of the fall in all his faculties, and both his mind and conscience are defiled. It is with reason in this sense alone that we have at present to do. It is no more an impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God to affirm the incompetence of corrupt reason in matters of religion, than it is to say, that an eye, which in consequence of disease does not see at all, or sees imperfectly, is unfit for the purpose which it was originally intended to serve.

From the preceding observations, we perceive that it is not from theory but from experiment, not from conjecture but from fact, that we can ascertain what assistance may be expected from reason in the study of theology. Let us, then, review some of the doctrines of what is called natural religion, and is supposed properly to lie within the province of reason, that we may see what has been the result of its researches.

The first principle of religion is the existence of God, who made us, and to whom we owe homage and obe-

dience. No doubt seems to be entertained that this fundamental truth is demonstrable by reason; and, accordingly, there are many books in which it is evinced by arguments so strong and conclusive, that it is not easy to conceive how any man who has attended to them can continue an atheist. The metaphysician, we should think, would be overpowered by the profound reasonings of Clarke; and the man of a plainer understanding, by the more obvious proofs collected in the writings of Ray, and Derham, and Paley. There is one thing which ought not to be overlooked, that this triumphant demonstration, as it may be justly called, is found only in the writings of Christians; for although a similar train was pursued by some of the heathen philosophers,—as Cicero in his work concerning the nature of the gods, and Socrates in the dialogues of Xenophon,—the illustration was not so ample as it is now made by the discoveries of modern philosophy, nor was the conclusion to which it naturally led, drawn with equal clearness and confidence. The cause of this difference we are at no loss to divine. To the Gentiles, the existence of God was a point involved in doubt, an inference to be deduced from premises; and they who saw some steps of the process, were not always able to see with equal distinctness the result. When Christians sit down to discuss the subject, they are fully convinced of the fact; and how different it is to discover an unknown truth, by a slow induction of particulars, and to find out proofs of a truth already admitted; how much easier the one process is than the other, you will perceive upon the slightest reflection. The former is like the voyage of Columbus, who did not know whether there was such a country as America, and had nothing but probability to support him amidst the difficulties and perils of the enterprise; the latter is like the same voyage now, when the place being known, the sailor can shape his course to it by his chart and his compass.

Nature, it is acknowledged, cries aloud in all her works that there is a God; "but she spoke in vain," as a late writer observes, "to the sages of antiquity, who either altogether failed to interpret her language, or suffered the still whisper of 'divine philosophy' to be lost amidst the various bustle of the world."

"The ancients, imperfect as their sciences were, knew more than enough of the harmony and design of the universe, to draw out an unanswerable argument from final causes; and in point of fact, they did draw out both that and other arguments so far as to leave us indisputable proof, that the God of NATURAL THEOLOGY will never be any thing more than the dumb idol of philosophy; neglected by the philosopher himself, and unknown to the multitude, acknowledged in the closet, and forgotten in the world."* This truth made no impression upon their minds, and it is not surprising that it did not, as their notions of it were exceedingly imperfect and erroneous. "The idea of what has been called the personality of the Deity, or his distinct subsistence, was in a great measure unknown to them. The Deity was considered not so much an intelligent being, as an animating power diffused throughout the world; and was introduced into their speculative system to account for the motion of that passive mass of matter, which was supposed coeval and co-existing with himself." In practice, they adopted the polytheism of their country, and paid religious honours to the endless train of gods and goddesses, who were acknowledged by the vulgar. There was not a nation upon earth but the Jews, in which the living and true God was adored. Every object was mistaken for him; every part of the universe was deified, and fancy exerted its creative power in superadding a multitude of imaginary beings; insomuch, that the gods of Greece, that seat of refinement and philosophy, amounted to thirty thousand. In modern India, where science has been long cultivated, the number is still greater, and we are astonished at the information that its gods are estimated by millions.* Such are the achievements of reason with respect to the first principle of religion.

In the second place, it is the office of religion to inform us of our relation to God, because this is the foundation of our duty to him. Although we should conceive the existence of an all-perfect being, if there subsisted no connexion between him and us, how much soever his excellencies might excite our admiration, he would have no claim to our homage and obedience. By us, God is regarded in the characters of our Creator and Governor; and these ideas are so familiar to our minds, so interwoven with our sentiments and feelings from our infancy, that they appear to us almost self-evident, and we can scarcely think it possible that they should not occur to every person of reflection. We believe that all things were created by the almighty power of God; and, although the production of the universe out of nothing is an event of which we can form no conception, because experience has not made us acquainted with any thing similar, yet we consider the cause as adequate, omnipotence being able to do every thing which does not imply a contradiction. But men, having the light of nature alone as their guide, entertained different sentiments. Unassisted reason never arrived at this conclusion, that the universe had a beginning; nor when it was suggested, did it obtain its assent. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, nothing is made out of nothing, was a maxim received without dispute by all the sages of antiquity. In the detail of their systems, they differed from each other; but they all concurred in rejecting as absurd the idea of a proper creation. Some of them believed, that the universe was eternal both in matter and form; that the sun, moon and stars in the heavens; plants, animals, and minerals on the earth, had always been; and that the human race had no beginning, and would have no end. Others maintained, that the present order of things had a beginning; but they attributed it to accident, to the fortuitous concourse of atoms, which, dancing up and down in infinite space, united themselves at last in the present regular system. Of those who acknowledged a deity, some, instead of considering him as the Creator, confounded him with his works; and imagined him to be a soul or vital principle diffused throughout the universe, and giving life and motion to its various parts, as the soul of man animates his body; while others, although they distinguished him from the universe, did not believe that he made it, but only that he reduced the wild chaotic mass into order. According to all of them, matter was co-eternal with the deity, and only thus far dependent upon him, that his power was exerted in moving and arranging it. Their notion, therefore, of the relation of man to God must have been very different from ours, who believe that he made us, and the earth on which we dwell, and the heavens which shed their influences upon us, and that "in him we live, and move, and have our being."

We could not expect those who were so much mistaken, or so imperfectly informed with respect to the character of God as the Creator of the world, to entertain just ideas of his government of it. It was natural for such philosophers as attributed the present system to chance, to deny a providence; and accordingly, the followers of Epicurus represented the gods as indolently reposing in their own region of undisturbed felicity, and beholding with indifference the concerns of mortals. The sentiments of some other philosophers

* Summer's Records of the Creation, preface.

* 330,000,000.

were different; and we are delighted to hear them expressing themselves in a manner approaching, in accuracy and sublimity, to the discourses of those who have derived their knowledge from the high source of revelation. "Of religion towards the gods," says Epictetus, "this is the principal thing, to form right conceptions of them as existing, and administering all things well and justly; to obey them, and acquiesce in all things that happen, and to follow willingly as being under the conduct of the most excellent mind." But the elevated language of the Stoics loses much of its value, when we reflect upon their doctrine of fate, which meant some inexplicable necessity by which all things were controlled, and to which gods as well as men were compelled to yield. The world, then, was not properly governed by the gods: but they, as well as their nominal subjects, were governed by fate, and bound by the eternal and inviolable chain of causes and effects. The opinion of the vulgar was more simple. The dominion of the gods was acknowledged by their prayers and thanksgivings, and other religious services; but even in their creed, the power of the gods was circumscribed by stern irresistible necessity, or was exercised with all the wantonness of caprice, and, as they did not hesitate to say, in some instances with injustice. The idea of a Providence floated in the minds of the heathens, but they were not able to give it a distinct and consistent shape. All that reason could do, was to point out the general truth; it failed in its attempts to illustrate it, and to erect upon this foundation the superstructure of rational piety.

Let us, in the next place, inquire what have been the discoveries of reason in morality. Here it must be acknowledged that its success has been greater. There are admirable treatises upon morality, which were composed by heathen philosophers, and may be perused with pleasure and advantage; but he is very ignorant indeed, who imagines that he shall find in them a perfect system of duty. Lactantius, indeed, has somewhere affirmed, that every thing delivered in the Scriptures on this subject, is contained in the writings of one or other of the philosophers; but Lactantius, although a fine reasoner, and an elegant writer, is not entitled to much deference in questions of theology, of which he has shown himself to be an incompetent judge. What he has affirmed is not true; for in the moral systems of the philosophers, some duties of great importance are omitted, and some things which they call virtues, when brought to the Christian standard, turn out to be vices. According to Cicero, "virtue proposes glory as its end, and looks for no other reward." Zeno maintained, "that all crimes are equal, and that a person who has offended or injured us should never be forgiven." It was his opinion, as well as that of other philosophers, "that the crime against nature is a matter of indifference." The Cynics held, "that there was nothing shameful in committing acts of lewdness in public." Aristippus affirmed, "that as pleasure was the *summum bonum*, a man might practise theft, sacrilege, or adultery, as he had opportunity." Humility, which is the first of Christian virtues, was despised as an indication of a mean, dastardly spirit; and the tendency of their moral lessons was to inspire a notion of personal dignity, a feeling of self-approbation, a consciousness of worth, which of all tempers the Scriptures pronounce to be the most offensive to our Maker. Besides the morality of the heathens, imperfect as it was, wanted authority. Being rather a deduction of reason, than a law emanating from the Author of our being, of the communications of whose will they were ignorant, it had little or no power over conscience; and the motives with which it was enforced, were not of sufficient efficacy to counteract the innate propensity to evil, and to overcome the strong temptations to which men are daily exposed. Hence a general depravity of manners prevailed among the ancient Gentiles, and still prevails among modern heathens to a degree, of which, corrupt as Christian countries are, we can hardly form a conception; a depravity which extended not only to the lower and uneducated classes, but to the higher and better informed, and even to the very men who professed to be teachers of wisdom. We are apt to impose upon ourselves, or to be imposed upon by others, when we are thinking of the heathen philosophers. We look upon them as a set of sages, who spent their days in the study and practice of virtue. But the particulars of their history which have come down to us, and the testimony of some of their own order, will correct this mistake, and show us that they were unprincipled declaimers, whose infamous conduct daily gave the lie to their eloquent harangues. Suspicion rests upon the most celebrated names; and with respect even to Socrates, the visit which he paid to an Athenian courtezan to see her beauty, and to teach her more perfectly the arts of seduction, and the profane oaths with which his conversation was interlarded, with some other particulars in his history, place him at an immense distance from the lowest member of a Christian church. Were this wisest of men according to the oracle, this pattern of every excellence according to the nonsensical panegyrics of pedants and fools, now to appear among us, no man with correct ideas of piety and morality would choose to be seen in his company.

Lastly, what was the result of the inquiries of reason with respect to the immortality of the soul? a doctrine of primary importance in religion. The common people generally believed, that the soul survived the death of the body, and that there was a future state of rewards and punishments; but they could assign no reason for the belief, but the authority of their ancestors and popular writers, especially the poets, the theologians of the vulgar. The doctrine had not been adopted by their ancestors in consequence of a process of reasoning from which it was the legitimate inference, but they also had received it without examination, upon the testimony of others. When thus traced back from age to age, it appears that it was a tradition, or a fragment of revelation, preserved amidst the general wreck; and consequently, that it is unfair to produce this article as a proof of the sagacity of reason in the investigation of truth. The philosophers, not content with implicit faith, endeavoured to prove the immortality of the soul by argument; but although they enjoyed this advantage, that the fact was known, and it was left to them only to bring evidence in support of it, they had no great cause to congratulate themselves on their success. Some of their arguments may be admitted to be good; but this praise is not due to them all. In the Phædo of Plato, the reasoning is often exceedingly obscure, and arguments are employed so fanciful, and so manifestly false, that while we cannot avoid pitying those who groped their way by the dubious twilight of nature, we are not surprised that they should have produced no permanent conviction in the mind. "I know not how it happens," says Cicero, "that, when I read, I assent, but when I have laid down the book, all that assent vanishes." After all the arguments which the philosophers could muster up, suspicion haunted their minds, that there was some step in the process which weakened the force of the conclusion. Socrates himself died in doubt, as we learn from the close of his Apology, as given by Plato. "It is time," he says to his judges, "for us to depart, that I may die, and you may live; to which of us shall it be better, is unknown to all but God." This uncertainty, this hesitation, we should take into the account, when we light upon some passage, in which the confidence of hope is expressed, and death seems to be longed for as a dismission "*ad illud divinum animorum concilium cœtumque, ex hac*

turba et colluvione,"* from this vile and worthless crowd into the divine council and assembly of souls. Their thoughts were as changeable as some of our days, which are alternately darkened by clouds and rain, and cheered by gleams of sunshine.

This induction of particulars will serve to prove the insufficiency of reason to acquire the knowledge of the principles of natural theology. Let no man presume to tell us that it is sufficient, till he can point out an instance, in which, without any assistance, it has discovered and established, by satisfactory arguments, the great truths of religion. And here I may observe, that little as reason has done, we have no evidence that it could have done so much, if all aid had been withheld, and it had been left to work out its discoveries alone. But its solitary strength has not been fairly tried; for man has never been without revelation, and, although it was in a great measure lost among the nations of the world, yet some fragments of it remained, with which they contrived to make up their various systems of religion. From this source, they derived the general idea of the existence of a God, and their notions of providence, of morality, and of a future state, and still more plainly, their oracles and prophets, their sacrifices, and the opinion of the placability of the divine nature upon which they were founded. Tradition was supplementary to reason. Its light, indeed, was faint; but still it served to show dimly some objects, which the eye of reason could not have discovered amidst the surrounding darkness. "Though the ancients," says Shuckford, referring to their theories concerning the origin of things, but his observations are applicable to other parts of theology, "have hinted many of the positions laid down by Moses, yet we do not find that they ever made use of any true and solid reasoning, or were masters of any clear and well-grounded learning, which might lead them to the knowledge of these truths. All the knowledge which the ancients had on these points lay at first in a narrow compass; they were in possession of a few truths which they had received from their forefathers; they transmitted these to their children, only telling them that such and such things were so, but not giving them reasons for, or demonstrations of the truth of them. Philosophy was not disputative until it came into Greece; the ancient professors had no controversies about it; they received what was handed down to them, and out of the treasure of their traditions imparted to others; and the principles they went upon to teach or to learn by, were not to search into the nature of things, or to consider what they could find by philosophical examinations, but, *ask and it shall be told you; search the records of antiquity, and you shall find what you inquire after;* these were the maxims and directions of their studies."†

We have now seen how defective reason is in what may be considered to be its proper province, natural theology. If we proceed to supernatural theology, we shall find, that here it is altogether useless. It cannot make a single discovery. It is like the eye, which is capable of perceiving objects upon earth that are not placed at too great a distance from it, but cannot discern those parts of creation which lie in the profound abysses of space, unless it be assisted by art. The line which separates natural and supernatural theology is impassable. On the one side of it, there are some gleams of light; on the other, there is impenetrable darkness. Supernatural theology is founded on that mysterious distinction in the Divine essence, which we call the Trinity, a distinction not altogether unknown to the heathen philosophers, as is evident from the writings of Plato and his followers, but which every person acknowledges they had learned from tradition. Although reason could demonstrate the existence of God, and his unity, it possesses no premises from which it could infer a plurality in his nature. It is a secret which he alone could disclose. Supernatural theology is also founded on the divine counsels respecting our fallen race, of which no trace can be looked for in creation, as they relate to a state of things posterior to it, and different from the state in which mankind was originally placed. We may investigate the design of our Maker in the formation of the universe, by observing the apparent tendency of his works, and say, that in subordination to the display of his perfections, it is the diffusion of happiness: but how shall we ascertain, except by information from himself, what is his design with respect to his revolted subjects, if he has any other design than to punish them? Some Christians have asserted, that in the works of God, there is an obscure revelation of grace; and the celebrated infidel writer, Lord Herbert, has laid it down as one of his five articles of natural religion, that if men repent of their sins, they will be forgiven; and this, I apprehend, is the meaning of the former, when they speak of a revelation of grace. But nature teaches no such thing; for, first, there is nothing in creation, or even in the dispensations of Providence, which, when fairly interpreted, indicates an intention on the part of God to pardon his disobedient creatures; and, secondly, the principle assumed as the dictate of nature, is false, it being the express doctrine of Scripture, that God does not pardon sinners upon repentance, without an atonement, of which nature knows nothing. But it is unnecessary to waste time upon a point so plain, as that the scheme of redemption, being founded in the sovereign will of God, and the purpose which he formed before the foundation of the world, could be known only by divine communication, and by its actual execution. Whether Job speaks of it or not, the following words will admit of an easy application to it. "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, it is not in me; and the sea saith, it is not with me." "Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? seeing it is hidden from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof, with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder; then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. And unto men he said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding."*

It is not my intention, in these observations upon the insufficiency of reason, to insinuate that it ought to be entirely discarded from religion. You will ask, then, what purpose does it serve? and to this question I shall endeavour to return an answer in the remaining part of this lecture.

Its first office is to judge of the evidence of religion; and while thus employed, it not only collects proofs from observation and experience in favour of the doctrines of natural theology, but examines the grounds upon which any new doctrine is said to be a divine communication. As various systems of religion have claimed to proceed from this high source, it brings them to the test. There are two ways in which this inquiry may be conducted. We may compare the system which demands our assent with our prior conceptions of the divine character and will, in order to ascertain whether it harmonizes with them, because it is certain that sound reason and a genuine revelation cannot contradict each other: Or, we may consider certain circumstances, extrinsic to the revelation itself, by

* Cic. de Senectute, xxiii. † Vol. i. preface, 47, 48.

* Job xxviii. 12. et seq.

which its pretensions to a supernatural origin may be determined. As I have not yet spoken directly of revelation, I am rather anticipating what would have been introduced more properly afterwards; but its connexion with the preceding part of the lecture is my apology for bringing it forward at present. The external circumstances to which I allude, are the character of the publishers of the system, the nature of their testimony, and the works to which they appeal in attestation of their mission; of all which, reason is competent to judge. The doctrines of the system may be so far beyond its range, that it shall be altogether incapable of deciding upon their truth or falsehood by an abstract contemplation of them; while the marks of truth with which they are accompanied may be of easy apprehension, and carry conviction to any ordinary understanding. He who is not able, by his own researches, to discover a truth, may find no difficulty in estimating the force of the proofs by which it is supported. We do not, then, retract what has been formerly said concerning the weakness of reason in matters of religion, when we constitute it judge of its evidence, in which there is nothing mysterious, nothing which is not as plain to a common understanding, as the subjects which the mind is called upon to consider in the common course of affairs.

The second office of reason is to examine the contents of revelation, to ascertain the sense of the words and phrases in which it is expressed, to bring to the illustration of it our previous knowledge of subjects connected with it, to trace the relation of its parts, and to draw out in regular order the system of doctrines and duties which it teaches. Our intellectual powers must be exercised with a view to obtain a distinct idea of the import of any communication which our Creator has condescended to make of his will. If we had no more understanding than the irrational animals, we should be equally incapable as they of religion; and if we did not employ our understanding in the study of it, it would be addressed to us in vain. God, having given us rational powers, requires us to exert them in the search of truth; and they are never so worthily employed as in endeavouring to acquire just notions of his character, and our relation to him; of the duty which he has enjoined upon us, and the hopes which his goodness authorizes us to entertain.

You will perceive, that the province which we have assigned to reason does not constitute it a judge of religion. It is not the doctrines of religion which we submit to its test, but the evidence. Let it canvass the evidence, and proceed to settle by the laws of criticism and common sense the genuine import of revelation; but here it should stop. "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther." The wisdom of God must not be tried by the foolishness of men. In the former case, reason acts as a servant: in the latter, it assumes the authority of a master. Man exchanges the character of a scholar for that of a teacher, and presumes to dictate to his Maker. I will not receive such doctrines, because I cannot conceive how they can be true; the ideas which they associate, appear to me to be contradictory. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" Presumptuous mortal! the range of thy thoughts extends only to a small portion of the universe; and of the objects which lie within this limited space, there is not one of which thou hast a perfect comprehension. And yet thou speakest as if thy mind grasped all possibilities. How canst thou tell what may, or what may not be, in the infinite essence of the Creator, or what counsels are worthy of that understanding which comprehends time and eternity by one act of intuition? "Who can, by searching, find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?"* He dwells in thick darkness; and the proper posture for thee is to fall down with humility and reverence before Him, whose judgments are unsearchable, and whose ways are past finding out.

* Job xi. 7.

LECTURE III.

SOURCES OF THEOLOGY: REVELATION.

Revelation, the second Source of Theology—A Revelation is possible; Objections stated and refuted: That it is desirable, asserted and proved from the natural Ignorance and Guilt of Mankind—Probable Character of a Divine Revelation: it should be fitted to dispel moral Ignorance; it should be authoritative; but not free from Mysteries and Difficulties.

In the preceding lecture, I stated that there are two sources from which we may derive our knowledge of theology, reason and revelation. Reason signifies the intellectual power of man, exercised without supernatural assistance in the investigation of religious truth. I have endeavoured to ascertain what is the amount of its discoveries; and it has appeared, that the streams which flow from this source are neither clear nor copious. I shall not now recapitulate what was said, as there will be an opportunity to revert to it in a subsequent part of the lecture.

Let us proceed to speak of the other source of theology, namely, divine revelation. I begin with a definition of the term:—revelation signifies information supernaturally communicated; and according to this general definition, it comprehends not only the discovery of truths which lay beyond the range of reason, but the publication, with new evidence and lustre, of such truths as are within its reach, but of which, in its present corrupt state, it had not been able to form distinct conceptions.

The first remark which I make is, that a revelation is possible. There is no reason to doubt, that he who had imparted to man a certain degree of light, by endowing him with intellectual powers, might impart to him a higher degree by some other means. In doing so, he would only act the same part with a person of superior talents and acquirements, who should make known to his pupils, by oral instruction, certain recondite truths which their utmost efforts could not have discovered. The subject may be illustrated by another comparison. Revelation is to the mind what a glass is to the eye, whether it be intended to correct some accidental defect in its structure, or to extend its power of vision beyond its natural limits. God, when he gave understanding to man, did not exert himself to the utmost of his power; nor did he come under an obligation never to enlarge this faculty, or to furnish it with extraordinary assistance. If man should sustain any injury in the intellectual part of his nature, there was nothing to hinder his benevolent Creator from repairing it; nor, if he should be brought into such circumstances that new knowledge was needed, was there any physical or moral cause which could prevent him from affording it. Revelation does not imply a reflection upon the original work of God, as if he had made man an intelligent creature, but afterwards found that the degree of intelligence was not adequate to the purposes of his being. The most zealous advocates for revelation maintain that reason, in its pure state, was perfectly sufficient for all the ends which it was intended to accomplish, and that the necessity of revelation arises from a new state of things, superinduced by man himself. He now needs more light, and it is the business of revelation to impart that light. All reasoning, the object of which is to establish the prior impossibility of a revelation, is manifestly absurd.

But attempts have been made to prove this point by arguments of a different kind. Doubts have been

raised, whether a revelation could be made, because it does not appear how a person could be certain that it was a genuine revelation, and not a dream or an illusion of fancy. "Enthusiasts," it has been said, "who are prompted only by a wild imagination, and persons in a phrensy, or the raving fit of a fever, are as fully satisfied of the reality of the things represented to them, and convinced of the truth and soundness of their own notions, as those are whose senses are clear and perfect, and whose reason is in its full vigour." On this ground, it has been represented as not easy to conceive how the prophets and apostles, as we call them, could have been so confident as they were that God had in reality made any revelation to them. But this argument is so foolish, that it may seem equally foolish to give a serious answer to it. What is the amount of it? It is this,—that there is much imposture in the world, and therefore there is no truth; that many persons are deceived, and therefore no man can know that he is in the right. To what purpose tell us of the dreams of enthusiasts, or of men labouring under fever or lunacy? We are speaking of persons in the full possession of their senses; for those to whom divine communications were made, although powerfully impressed, and strongly excited to act under their impulse, were not agitated like the priests of Baal, or the Pythoness of Delphi, but retained the calm exercise of their faculties, and were able to distinguish among their thoughts those which could be traced to a natural cause, and those which proceeded from a higher source. Besides the objection is founded on a supposition, than which one more absurd cannot be conceived, that although God might make a communication to the mind of an individual, he could not convince that individual that it was a communication from himself. He could infuse ideas into his mind, but he could not enable him to discern whether they were true or false, whether there was any thing real in them, or they were the shadowy creation of fancy. A man can assure his correspondent, that the message which he receives, comes from him, and not from another; but God, it seems, possesses no means of authenticating his declarations. It must for ever remain uncertain, whether they are the dictates of infinite wisdom, or the offspring of a disordered brain. The man who should think that there is any force or even any degree of plausibility in this argument against the possibility of a revelation, may be justly considered as destitute of common sense. I can hardly believe that any infidel was ever so stupid as to lay any stress upon it; and am disposed to suspect that it may be referred rather to the malice, than to the cool judgment of those by whom it has been retailed. We, indeed, cannot tell how inspired men distinguished divine communications from the suggestions of their own minds, for this obvious reason, that they have not informed us, and we have not experienced such communications. But our ignorance ought not to be opposed to their knowledge, and to the unquestionable fact, that God could stamp upon his communications infallible signatures of truth.

But although a person, to whom a divine communication was made, might be fully assured of the source from which it came, it has been objected, that the assurance must remain with himself, as there are no means by which he can produce a similar conviction in others. To this argument it has been replied, that God might enable him to give such signs as should satisfy others that he is his messenger. But this answer, which seems to be perfectly rational, infidels are not disposed to admit, and they endeavour to evade it by various pretexts. Some of them argue as if miracles were impossible. If they mean, that there is no power by which a miracle could be performed, we may close this controversy with them, because it is manifest, that they are atheists in their hearts, whatever hypocritical professions they make of their belief of a Deity; if they mean, that God, having established the laws of nature, will never alter them, they assume a principle which they cannot support by a shadow of proof, and which we are at perfect liberty to deny. Is he bound by fate, like the gods of heathenism? or has he bound himself by an immutable decree? What should hinder him from occasionally changing his ordinary mode of operation, when some great purpose of his moral government will be accomplished by the change? Whether would wisdom be more displayed by pursuing a uniform course, without any regard to new combinations of circumstances, or by deviating from it, to meet the emergencies which might arise in the progress of events? It is not worth while to spend time in refuting a gratuitous assumption. If it can be shown, that a single alteration or suspension of the laws of nature ever took place, these profound speculations vanish into smoke.

But some, who admit that miracles are possible, maintain that they are not sufficient to prove a revelation, upon this ground, that there is no necessary connexion between truth and power. We acknowledge that the power of man may be, and often has been, exerted in favour of falsehood; but what has this to do with the dispensations of an all-perfect Being, in whose eyes truth is sacred, and of whom it would be blasphemous to suppose that he would interpose to lead his creatures into error? But the infidel will perhaps tell us, that this is not what he means. He suspects no intention in the Deity to deceive; but he cannot place confidence in the fidelity of his messengers; or, at least, he has no assurance that they would honestly deliver their message, and religiously abstain from adding to it, or taking from it. They may alter it to serve a particular purpose, and may employ the miraculous power with which they are invested, to give authority and currency to imposture. But, surely, as God is thoroughly acquainted with the characters of men, and foresees their future actions, we might assume it as certain, that he would not commit a trust so important, so intimately connected with his own glory, and the happiness of his creatures, to any person by whom he foresaw that it would be abused. The supposition of its abuse is a direct impeachment of the knowledge or the wisdom of God in the arrangement of his plan. Besides, no man who believes that God has power over his creatures, over their minds as well as their bodies, can doubt that he is able to exert, and would exert, a controlling influence upon his servants, which would prevent them from corrupting, and suppress all desire to corrupt, the revelation which they were appointed to deliver to the world. They would be thus far passive in his hands, that they could not frustrate his design in selecting them. It is vain to tell us that men are voluntary agents; for while we admit this truth, we know that their freedom does not render them independent of their Maker; that by some mysterious link, it is connected with the immutability of his counsel; and that their liberty is unimpaired at the moment when they are fulfilling what he had determined before to be done. But there is another consideration, which will still more clearly demonstrate the absurdity of the supposition, that men may apply to a different purpose the miraculous powers with which they are endowed in order to attest revelation. Infidels seem to suppose, that a man may possess the power of working miracles, in the same manner as he possesses the power of moving his arm; that, by the gift of God, it becomes inherent in him, and is as much subject to his will as any of his natural powers. But their ideas are totally erroneous. Even among Christians, there is perhaps an indistinctness of conception upon the subject; and they speak of the power of working miracles as if it were some divine virtue, residing in the person by whom it is exercised.

But in this sense, the power of working miracles was never vested in any mere man. In every case, God was the worker of the miracles; and all that belonged to the prophet or apostle was to give the sign, or to pronounce the words, which the miracle immediately followed. No person ever dreamed, that, when Moses stretched out his rod over the Red Sea, he exerted a power by which its waters were divided; the account given by himself accords with the suggestions of reason on the subject: "And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided."* The same remark may be made upon all other miracles, which were equally beyond the sphere of human ability. If this statement be correct, it follows that the case supposed is altogether imaginary. No man could abuse the power of working miracles, because, to speak strictly, no man ever possessed it. The power was in God, and not in his servant; and could the servant wield the omnipotence of his Lord at his pleasure? No; he might give the usual sign, or pronounce the usual words, but, if it was his intention to deceive, no effect would have followed. This argument, therefore, against the possibility of a revelation, is as destitute of force as the others. It is founded in a confusion of ideas, in a gross misapprehension of the subject, and will cause no difficulty to those who consider that men were merely the instruments of the miracles which God was pleased to work by his immediate power.

Having shown that a revelation is possible, and pointed out the futility of the pretexts, by which a proposition so simple and obvious has been perplexed, I remark, in the next place, that it is desirable. In this sentiment, all will concur but those who account religious truth a matter of absolute indifference, or who believe that reason is sufficient for all the discoveries which are necessary to guide men to virtue and happiness. Infidels adopt the latter principle, but at the same time give abundant evidence that they are influenced by the former. In no part of their conduct is there any indication of reverence for religious truth, and of a sincere desire to discover it; but they continually betray symptoms of levity and impiety, a contempt for seriousness, a disposition to cavil rather than to inquire, to muster up objections, to perplex evidence, to involve every thing in doubt, and to turn the most solemn of all subjects into ridicule; so that, it should seem, that there is nothing which they are less eager to discover than truth, and that nothing would be so unwelcome as a clear and convincing manifestation of it. But whatever are the thoughts of men devoted to pleasure, and living without God in the world, every person who feels that he is an accountable being, must be desirous to know by what means he may fulfil the design of his existence, and obtain the happiness of which his nature is capable.

That a revelation is desirable is evident from what you heard in the preceding lecture. I there considered reason as a source of theology, and proved its insufficiency to give us satisfactory information respecting the doctrines of natural religion. It is proper, in this place, to take a short review of the observations which were made upon this subject. It appeared, that the existence of one God, which is the fundamental principle of religion, is not discoverable by reason, or, at least, cannot be discovered by it with such clearness as to produce a firm, permanent, and practical conviction of it in the mind. Hence we find, that not only did the people in all heathen nations fall into polytheism and the grossest superstition, but the philosophers patronised, by their example, the errors of the vulgar; and if they sometimes spoke of one God in their writings, there was nothing like certainty and consistency in their opinions. Amidst their speculations, the idea occurred to them, but obscurity hung upon it, and to the wisest of them he remained an unknown God. It appeared also, that their notions of his relation to man were exceedingly imperfect. None of them believed a proper creation, all holding the eternity of matter; and their views of providence, even when they approached nearest to the truth, were very different from those which we have learned from revelation, as they maintained the doctrine of fate, to whose irresistible decrees the gods, as well as men, were compelled to bow. It appeared further, that, although they had made greater progress in the science of morality, the general precepts of which are suggested by conscience, by the relations subsisting among men, and by means of private and public utility, they were not able to deliver a perfect code of duty. In their best systems, there were great defects; virtue was mistaken for vice, and vice for virtue; there were omissions which ought to have been supplied, and redundancies which ought to have been retrenched. Besides, their moral precepts wanted authority; in proportion as the sanctions of religion were imperfectly understood, their power over the heart was feeble; they were rather themes of declamation than rules of practice, and proved utterly insufficient to render the teachers themselves virtuous, and, as might be naturally expected, to restrain the torrent of licentiousness among the people. Lastly, it appeared, that with respect to the immortality of the soul, the wisest men lived and died in doubt. In the popular creed, future rewards and punishments had a place; but they were treated with derision by those who boasted of superior wisdom, partly on account of the ridiculous manner in which they were described by the poets, and partly because they rested upon no solid ground. They were reputed tales of the nursery, or the fictions of poets. The light of nature was too feeble to dispel the darkness which enveloped the world beyond the grave.

A revelation was desirable, although had it gone no further than to solve those doubts, and to shed light upon the doctrines of natural religion. These were interesting to all, and engaged the particular attention of men of reflection; but the success of their inquiries by no means corresponded with the earnestness of their wishes. In these circumstances, would not revelation be acceptable as is the rising of the sun to the bewildered traveller, who is anxiously seeking the road to the place of his destination, but cannot find it amidst the darkness of the night! There are several passages in the writings of the heathens which show, that while they were sensible of their ignorance, they were persuaded that there was no remedy for it but in a divine interposition. "The truth is," says Plato, speaking of future rewards and punishments, "to determine or establish any thing certain about these matters, in the midst of so many doubts and disputations, is the work of God only." Again, one of the speakers, in his Phædo, says to Socrates concerning the immortality of the soul, "I am of the same opinion with you, that, in this life, it is either absolutely impossible, or extremely difficult, to arrive at a clear knowledge in this matter." In his apology for Socrates, he puts these words into his mouth, on the subject of the reformation of manners: "You may pass the remainder of your days in sleep, or despair of finding out a sufficient expedient for this purpose, if God, in his providence, do not send you some other instruction." But the most remarkable passage is in the dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades, on the duties of religious worship. The design of the dialogue is to convince Alcibiades that men labour under so much ignorance, that they should be exceedingly cautious in their addresses to the gods, and should content themselves with very general prayers, or what is better, not to pray at all. "To me," he

* Exod. xiv. 21.

says, "it seems best to be quiet; it is necessary to wait till you learn how you ought to behave towards the gods, and towards men." "When," exclaims Alcibiades, "when, O Socrates! shall that time be, and who will instruct me, for most willingly would I see this man who he is?" "He is one," replies Socrates, "who cares for you; but, as Homer represents Minerva as taking away darkness from the eyes of Diomedes, that he might distinguish a god from a man, so it is necessary that he should first take away the darkness from your mind, and then bring near those things by which you shall know good and evil." "Let him take away," rejoins Alcibiades, "if he will, the darkness or any other thing, for I am prepared to decline none of those things which are commanded by him, whoever this man is, if I shall be made better."* The passage is truly curious, and deserves particular attention from us at this time, as a proof of the longings of nature for such a revelation as has been since given to the world. The wisest philosopher of antiquity acknowledged it to be necessary, and ventures to anticipate it, without, however, knowing what he said. His disciple was transported at the thought, and professed his readiness to submit to the lessons of his teacher. It is only among the present race of unbelievers, the Socrateses and Platos of modern times, as they would have us to account them, that the idea of a revelation is held up to ridicule, and the self-sufficiency of reason is maintained.

What were the ideas of the heathens in general with respect to a revelation, we may infer from some parts of their religion. Their prayers were applications to the gods for direction and assistance in the conduct of affairs; their priests and priestesses, whom they believed to be inspired, their omens and auguries, and their oracles which they consulted in cases of difficulty, were so many testimonies to the general conviction, that the ignorance and infirmity of man rendered intercourse with beings of superior wisdom and power necessary to his welfare. 'It was thus that the defects of reason would be supplied. What man knew not, the gods could teach him; and it was chiefly to the temple of Apollo, the god of wisdom, that the Greeks, and persons from other nations, repaired, to obtain the responses of the oracle in matters of public and private interest.

Revelation would be desirable, even although reason were capable of discovering all the truths of natural religion. It would not follow, upon that supposition, that they were so obvious as to be discovered without any labour. The exercise of our mental powers would be necessary to collect the proofs of the existence and government of God, and to trace our duty in its manifold ramifications. There are no innate ideas in the human mind, no ideas with which we are born, and which we perceive intuitively as soon as reason begins to dawn; all our knowledge is derived from observation and experience. Hence it is evident, that a revelation would facilitate the acquisition of knowledge to all, and particularly to those whose intellectual faculties were originally not strong, and had not been improved by education, and whose daily occupations afforded them little leisure for inquiry and reflection. It cannot be denied, that a great part of mankind labour under disadvantages for the discovery of truth; that they are apt to be misled by false opinions, and distracted by worldly cares, and to neglect those objects which require abstraction of mind and patient investigation. The infidel himself is compelled, by indisputable facts, to acknowledge, that, whatever power he ascribes to reason, it has generally failed to lead men to a rational system of religion; nay, that such a system was never established by its aid, in any nation, or even in any school of philosophy. It is manifest, therefore, that if a revelation had been granted to point out at once the conclusions at which reason could have arrived only by a tedious process, it would have been an invaluable gift to the world. Upon this subject, we can entertain no doubt. A revelation has been granted, and what is the consequence? The doctrines of natural religion are better understood than they were at any former period; they are known not only to men of studious and contemplative minds, but to the illiterate; we become acquainted with them at the outset of life; and there are thousands of young persons in a Christian country, whose knowledge far exceeds that of the most distinguished heathen philosopher. They have learned by a few lessons more than he could acquire by the painful researches of a long life.

We have proved, however, that reason is not sufficient to discover the truths of natural religion; and, consequently, that revelation was not only desirable, but necessary, to deliver men from a state of ignorance at once shameful and perilous. And this necessity will be more apparent, if we consider that they were not only ignorant but guilty, fallen from innocence and happiness, condemned by the law of nature, a clearer discovery of which would have served only to impress more strongly on their minds a conviction of demerit, and to heighten the dread of their offended Creator. The republication of the law of nature would have done nothing to quiet their apprehensions and revive their hopes; on the contrary, it would have had the same effect as would take place in the case of a criminal, who, suspecting that he was doomed to punishment, should have the sentence of death put into his hands, distinctly written, and authenticated by the signature of the judge. Still he knows that his prince can reprieve him; but whether he will extend mercy to him, he cannot learn from the law which has condemned him, but by a new communication, transmitted in a different channel. The situation of men, in consequence of sin, is like that of the criminal. The law under which they were made has pronounced sentence upon them; the lawgiver, according to the best conceptions which they can form of his character, is just, and able to maintain the authority of his law. There is, indeed, a display of goodness and patience in his administration, but it is so intermixed with tokens of his wrath, that the hope to which it may give rise is faint and fluctuating; and unbiassed reason must come to this conclusion, that the guilty have every thing to fear. If the lawgiver has any merciful design towards his rebellious subjects, it is a secret in his own breast, and all our speculations on the subject are conjectural and presumptuous. In the commencement of our course, while we have not yet proved that a revelation has been given, I cannot quote any parts of it as possessing more authority than belongs to the sayings of an ordinary man, which are agreeable to the dictates of reason and common sense. The following words of the apostle of the Gentiles are brought forward merely as a just representation of the state of the case:—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."* As the thoughts of a man are known to none but himself; as he alone is conscious of them, and they remain concealed from others, unless he disclose them by external signs; so the counsels of God with respect to his fallen creatures are a mystery, hidden from every eye but his own, a secret which no sagacity could explore. And those counsels are so much above our conceptions,

* Platonis Alcibiad. ii.

* 1 Cor. ii. 9—11.

so different from any thing which appears in creation and providence, that no idea of them would have ever occurred to the human mind in its loftiest excursions. It is evident, therefore, that a revelation is necessary for the information of man, in the new circumstances in which he was placed. He wanted to know whether the Deity was placable; whether he was disposed to exercise clemency to offenders; upon what terms he would receive them into favour, and by what expedient he would adjust the claims of mercy and justice. Who does not see, that in reference to points so interesting, but so obscure, none could give him satisfaction but God himself? If a revelation had not been granted, there would not have been any religion in the world. What natural religion actually is, you will learn, not from the factitious systems of Christian writers, but from its state among heathen nations; and although it is hardly worthy to be accounted religion, yet if you are disposed to give it this name, remember that any portion of truth which it contains is not derived from unassisted reason, but from tradition, and that it is probably owing to this cause that it has not become utterly extinct. Revelation is indisputably the sole origin of the religion which we profess. Without it, we should have been profoundly ignorant of the Saviour in whom we believe, and of the promises which are the ground of our hope.

I have endeavoured to show that a revelation is possible and desirable, and proceeding a step farther, have affirmed that it is necessary. This necessity arises from the ignorance of mankind respecting points of the greatest importance, which could be remedied by no other means. It was necessary that light should be thrown upon those primary truths, in which we conceive man to have been at first instructed by his Maker, but which his dim-sighted reason could no longer discern in their original purity and beauty; and that new discoveries should be made to him, adapted to the exigencies of the new situation in which he had been placed in his apostacy from God. This general view of the design of revelation leads me to inquire what, upon a calm and unbiassed view of the subject, we might previously expect to be its nature and character.

First,—we might expect it to contain all the information which man wants, as a moral and accountable being. We cannot conceive any design with which it should be given, but to communicate to us the knowledge of God, and of our duty to him, and to point out the means of regaining his favour, and rising to perfection and felicity. Proceeding as it does, according to the hypothesis, from the Fountain of wisdom and goodness, it must be perfect, like his other works; that is, it must be fitted to answer its end. Neither defect nor redundance would be consistent with the character of its author. But remember that its end is religion; and that if it accomplish this end, it is worthy of God, although there should be many other ends, and these, too, of importance to mankind, to which it is not adapted. There is much knowledge which is useful and necessary to us in the present life, but which it would be unreasonable to expect that a divine revelation should teach us. There is the knowledge of the arts, by which human life is sustained, and cheered, and adorned, and the knowledge of the sciences, which not only gratify curiosity, but lend their aid to improve the arts, and promote in various ways our temporal interests. But revelation says nothing about them, because they are not connected with its main design, and here reason is perfectly sufficient. There are also many questions, relative to the nature of God and our own, the constitution of the universe, the phenomena of the moral world, and a future state of existence, of which it would gratify us much to obtain a satisfactory solution; and to some idle speculatists, information concerning them would be more acceptable than communications of unspeakably greater importance. But these questions have nothing to do with our duty, and although they were all answered to our complete satisfaction, they would make us neither wiser nor better; they would not relieve a guilty conscience, or console an afflicted heart. It is for purposes of greater moment that the God of heaven will deviate from his usual course; it is to send down some rays of celestial light to our benighted world, to show us the path to glory and immortality.

Secondly,—we might expect a revelation to deliver its instructions rather in an authoritative than in an argumentative manner. The argumentative manner is proper, when we are addressed by men who have no title to be heard, unless they give reasons for what they say, or content themselves with the idle labour of repeating self-evident propositions. The authoritative manner has been sometimes adopted by certain professed teachers of wisdom, but they had to deal with a very credulous audience, or they had contrived previously to establish a belief of their superior attainments. Pythagoras enjoined silence upon his disciples for a certain number of years, during which they were to give an implicit assent; and αυτος εφη, *he said it*, passed current among them as sufficient authority. But, whatever blind submission there may be among mankind to the dictates of others, it is generally reprobated as unworthy of our rational nature. It is demanded of him who pretends to teach others, that he should prove what he affirms, because it is evidence only which can produce rational conviction, and no man has a right to call upon others to follow him, unless he can show them that the way is safe. But a different procedure is suitable to a divine revelation. It comes from the Source of wisdom, who is not liable to err, and can have no intention to deceive us; from the Author of our being, who has a right to require that we should serve him with the submission of our understandings, as well as with the love of our hearts. Revelation is not a counsel, but a law. It is not proposed as a subject of deliberation, which may be accepted or rejected according to the result; but it is a declaration of the will of the supreme Lord, which all, to whom it is published, are bound to obey. Nothing would be more unjust than to object against a revelation, because it was propounded in a tone of authority. The objection, however, was made when the Christian revelation was promulgated; and we find Celsus, who expressed the sentiments of other philosophers, exclaiming against our religion and its ministers, because, instead of reasoning with men, they required them to believe. The objection would have been well founded, if, without producing any proof of the divine origin of the gospel, they had insisted that men should believe it; but after the evidence had been exhibited they acted in character when, speaking in the name of God, they commanded their hearers to acquiesce in the dictates of his wisdom, without murmuring and disputing. If in this stage of the business I may be allowed to appeal to the revelation which has been given to the world, it will be found that although reasoning is employed on particular occasions, upon the whole it is delivered in an authoritative form. There is a striking example at the beginning of it, for the account of the creation is not supported by a single argument, but is delivered in a simple narrative, to be received upon the authority of the writer or rather of God, by whom he was inspired.

Lastly,—we might expect that there would be some difficulties in a divine revelation. At first it might seem that difficulties would be inconsistent with its design, which is, as the word imports, to discover what is unknown, and to illuminate what is obscure. But a little reflection would convince us that even here perfect light is not to be looked for. Such a degree might be reasonably expected, as should fully assure us of the great doctrines and duties of religion, but not so much

as to give us complete satisfaction respecting all the points of which we might wish to be informed. Revelation speaks of the things of God; and how could they be made plain to our understandings? Language, being the vehicle of human thought, could not convey a distinct account of subjects which the human faculties are unable to comprehend. There are facts relative to the essence and the dispensations of the Almighty which it may be necessary that we should know, because our duty may be intimately connected with them, but which it may be impossible to explain to us. Revelation demands faith; and pure faith is an act of the mind, by which it assents to certain facts, or propositions upon the authority of testimony, without having any other evidence of their truth. Faith is therefore more perfect in proportion as the thing to be believed possesses less credibility in itself, and rests solely upon the veracity of the testifier. Hence we may conceive a great moral purpose to be served by the difficulties which are found in revelation. Whether in some cases they might not have been avoided, is a question which we are not competent to discuss; but they are so far from counteracting, that they promote the design of revelation, which is to make us not only wise, but good, to exercise our moral as well as our intellectual powers. Difficulties are a trial of man's dispositions, like our Lord himself in the state of humiliation and suffering, who to some was precious, but to others a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. They call for docility and humble submission to divine authority; and wherever these tempers are, revelation will be cordially received. But the men who are elated by the pride of science will not stoop to authority, and refuse to believe what they cannot comprehend. They must do as they have a mind. If, notwithstanding the luminous evidence with which revelation is attended, they will reject it because every part is not adjusted by the square and compass of reason, they only betray their own folly and presumption, and they must abide the consequences.

LECTURE IV.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

Has a Revelation been given?—Inquiry confined to Christianity—On the genuineness of the Christian Scriptures: Account of the Books of the Old Testament; The Pentateuch; Historical and circumstantial Evidence of its Genuineness stated; General Observations respecting the other Books—Apocryphal Books.

In the preceding lecture, I showed that a revelation is possible; that it is desirable; and that it is necessary. I concluded by stating the general expectations which might be previously entertained respecting its contents.

Let us now proceed to inquire whether a revelation has been actually given; whether there is ground to believe that what reason could not teach us, has been made known to us by supernatural means. Pretensions to revelation have been common, of which we have examples in the Sibylline Oracles of the Romans, and the sacred books of the Persians and Hindoos; but it is not necessary to examine their claims, since, with one consent, they are acknowledged to be impostures. Nor shall we spend our time in considering the pretended revelation of Mahomet, which has been received by a large portion of the human race in Asia, Africa, and Europe. Its author was able to produce no evidence of its divine origin, but his own affirmation that it was communicated to him by the angel Gabriel. If he talked of miracles, they were such as had been witnessed by himself alone, and consequently were no ground of belief to others. He appealed, indeed, to the intrinsic excellence of the Koran, as an evidence that it had emanated from a higher source than human ingenuity, and has thus subjected it to the test of criticism. The beauty of the style has been extolled by competent judges, but this amounts only to a proof of the taste of the composer, and, at the most, entitles it to be ranked with the elegant productions of other ages and countries. But it is the language only which has a claim to admiration; an acquaintance with the matter is sufficient to convince us that it is the work of a man, and of a man by no means pre-eminent in intellectual attainments. It is a farrago of incoherent rhapsodies; it abounds in silly and puerile remarks; and, had it appeared among a people whose taste and judgment were disciplined by literature and science, it would have excited universal disgust and contempt. A few passages have been often quoted as specimens of the true sublime, but they have obtained praise much beyond their merit, in consequence of the wretched stuff amidst which they appear, as a green spot planted with trees and abounding in springs, seems a paradise to the traveller who has been journeying for many days in the parched and sandy desert. After all, the passages which have been so much extolled are not original, but have evidently been borrowed from our Scriptures, and have suffered injury in passing through the clumsy hands of the impostor. Posterior to the Jewish and Christian revelations, the Koran is indebted to them for any portion of truth, for any noble sentiments which it contains; and these are neutralized by its falsehoods and immoralities. It does not exhibit a single character of divinity; it is fraught with ridiculous stories and superstitious precepts; while, without any reason, it inculcates total abstinence from wine, it grants almost unbounded license to the sexual appetite; the punishments which it denounces in the future state, although terrible to our animal nature, have been conceived by a low and childish imagination; and the paradise which it promises to his followers is a brothel. We presume, that if a revelation come from God, it will be distinguished by the signatures of his moral perfections, as a work of man discovers the powers and dispositions of the mind which contrived it. The Koran is stamped with the express image and superscription of the profligate in whose brain it was concocted; and in the absence of all internal and external evidence of its truth, it was first propagated and is still supported by the sword. Its success proves only that Mahomet was a conqueror, and that his followers, stimulated to frenzy by enthusiasm, were too strong for the nations whose dominions they invaded under the standard of the crescent. There is not an instance of a nation which embraced the religion of Mahomet from a calm, unbiassed investigation of its claims.

No alleged revelation has any semblance of truth but that which is contained in our Scriptures, as infidels themselves will acknowledge. They reject, indeed, every revelation; but they cannot deny that there are arguments in its favour, to meet which, they have been compelled to call forth all the resources of their ingenuity. Mahomet was evidently a favourite with Gibbon, and he has employed all the force of his eloquence to depict the heroism of his followers, and the success of his arms; but he did not for a moment suppose him to be a prophet, or attribute his procedure to any higher cause than enthusiasm or imposture. Other infidels content themselves with laughing at his religion; but besides ridicule, they find it necessary to bring the most powerful arguments which their cause can furnish, to bear against Christianity. It is on this account, and because it is the religion which we have adopted, that our attention shall be exclusively directed to it; and, if we succeed in establishing its divine origin, we virtually disprove all other revelations, because it

is obvious, that contradictory systems cannot all proceed from a Being of whom truth is an essential attribute.

Before we can establish the truth of revelation, we must ascertain what it is, and where it is to be found. There are certain books in which it is said to be contained, commonly called the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; and that these are faithful records can be known only by ascertaining that they are genuine, that they are the writings of the persons whose names they bear, or to whom they are ascribed. This is the first step, and it leads to a proof of their authenticity. Let me request your attention to the difference between these two words, which are sometimes confounded. When we call a writing *genuine*, we mean that it is really the composition of the person whom it claims as its author; when we call it *authentic*, we mean that its contents are true, that it possesses authority to command belief. These qualities are by no means inseparable. A book may be genuine which is not authentic, because it is a mere assemblage of fictions and falsehoods. On the other hand, a book may be authentic, that is, may contain information on which dependence should be placed, although it was written by a different person from its reputed author. But genuineness and authenticity are inseparably connected in the case of the sacred writings; for if we can show that they were written by the persons whose names they bear, it follows that they are worthy of credit; because, had their contents not been true, they would not have been received, as in fact they were, by those to whom they were addressed.

The necessity of ascertaining the genuineness of the Scriptures will be manifest upon reflection. They relate miracles; but how do we know that the miracles were actually performed? This is one argument in favour of them, that the books were published at the time of the miracles, and were then received; for it is evident, that, if the miracles had not been really wrought, the narrative would have been rejected as fabulous. It is only on the supposition of their genuineness, that we can believe their report of supernatural facts to be true. They contain prophecies; but, whether these are to be considered as true predictions, can be determined only by the fact, that the books were written prior to the events which they profess to foretell. You see, then, the reason why, in endeavouring to demonstrate the truth of our religion, we begin with an examination of its records. I shall consider them in the order of publication.

I begin with those of the Old Testament. That they existed in the state in which we now find them, in the days of our Saviour and his immediate followers, is evident from his references to them under the title of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms; and from the numerous quotations from them by the evangelists and apostles. Among the Jews, the Law signified the five books of Moses; and the prophets and Holy Writings, or, as they were sometimes called, the Psalms, because this was the first or principal book in this division, comprehended all the rest. We have also the testimony of Josephus,* who wrote in the first century, and informs us, that the Jews had twenty-two sacred books; five of Moses, thirteen of the Prophets, and four containing hymns and moral precepts. You might think, in counting the books, that Josephus has omitted some of them, because you find that there are actually thirty-nine: it is therefore proper to inform you, that the Jews made an arrangement corresponding to their alphabet, which contained only twenty-two letters, and reduced the Sacred Writings to the same number, by making a single book of the twelve minor Prophets, a single book of the Prophecies and Lamentations of Jeremiah, and by joining in one of the two books of Samuel, the two books of Kings, the two books of Chronicles, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the books of Judges and Ruth. By a small change in the classification, the modern Jews have made the number twenty-four.

Having found the Jewish Scriptures in the days of our Saviour, we can trace them two or three hundred years back to the time when they were translated into Greek. The version is known by the name of the Septuagint, because it has been supposed to be the work of seventy or seventy-two interpreters, who came for this purpose from Judea to Egypt at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphus. Many strange stories have been circulated about it; and in particular, Justin Martyr relates that they were shut up in separate cells, where each made a translation; that when the translations were compared, they were found to agree to a tittle, and that Ptolemy being convinced, as well he might, that they were supernaturally assisted, held them in high honour, and having bountifully rewarded them, sent them back to their own country. The story is now exploded as fabulous; and it is wonderful that it was ever believed. No man who has read the translation can suppose that the authors were inspired. It is full of mistakes and errors, deviates widely from the original in many instances, and sometimes presents passages which it would require an oracle to explain. Its true history is obscure. It is not certain that even the Pentateuch was translated by the order of Ptolemy. It is probable that it was undertaken by the Jews in Egypt, who, not understanding Hebrew, were anxious to have the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue; and the five books of Moses having been turned into Greek, to be used in the synagogues, where the law was read once a year, the other books were added at different times. The purpose for which I have referred to this translation is, to show that at the time when it was made, the Jews possessed the same books which they still acknowledge as divine.

I am not aware that any information respecting them can be derived from any foreign source, at a period more remote. I presume, however, that it will not be denied that they existed in the days of Ezra, about whose time the canon was completed by the writings of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. If we will not believe the Jews, when they tell us that the books are inspired, we surely may believe them when they affirm, on the faith of uninterrupted tradition, that they were in being at the termination of the Babylonian captivity. As we are certain that their religion was then observed with all its forms and institutions, we cannot doubt that they possessed the law upon which the whole ritual is founded. We may rest in this conclusion with the more confidence, as no person has ventured to suggest that the books were forged after that period.

I have said that they then possessed the Law; and in what follows, I shall direct your attention to the books of Moses. If we may give credit to the historical books of the Old Testament, merely as a narrative of facts, as containing the annals of the nation,—and there is no more reason for calling in question their credibility than those of other national records,—we shall be able to trace back the law of Moses within a few years after his death. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, there are numerous references to it, and it was publicly read in their days in an assembly of the people. During the time of the captivity, express mention is made of it by Daniel in his solemn prayer and confession, recorded in the ninth chapter of his prophecies;* and such mention, as being incidental, carries irresistible evidence of its existence. During the reign of Josiah, not long before the captivity, a copy was found in the temple;† and from the

* Joseph. cont. Apion, lib. i.

* Verses 11 and 13.

† 2 Kings xxii. 8.

attention which it excited, and the impression made by its contents, it is probable that it was the autograph of Moses, the identical copy written with his own hands, which was deposited in the tabernacle. We can trace it in the reign of Hezekiah, when all things were done "according to the law of Moses the man of God:"* in the reign of Jehosaphat, who sent judges through the land, who had "the book of the law of the Lord with them," and "taught the people:"† in the reigns of David and Solomon, for we find the former before his death charging the latter "to keep the statutes and commandments, the judgments and testimonies of the Lord, as it is written in the law of Moses."‡ During the succession of judges, this law was the rule according to which they governed the people; and this was the charge of Joshua to the Israelites, "Be ye very courageous to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left."‖ Unless the whole history of the Israelites be rejected as a forgery,—and on better ground we might reject the history of the Greeks and Romans, the repeated references which are made to the law of Moses, plainly with no design but to appeal to it as the law of the land, furnish sufficient evidence that it existed, not as a tradition, but in writing, from his own time down to the close of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Let not the evidence be deemed defective because we cannot produce testimonies that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch from contemporary writers. If there were any at that remote period, their works and their memory have perished. "The Jews, as a nation," says Sumner, in his Treatise on the Records of the Creation, "were always in obscurity, the certain consequence, not only of their situation, but of the peculiar constitution and jealous nature of their government. Can it then reasonably be expected that we should obtain positive testimony concerning this small and insulated nation from foreign historians, when the most ancient of these, whose works remain, lived more than a thousand years posterior to Moses? Can we look for it from the Greeks, when Thucydides has declared that even respecting his own countrymen he could procure no authentic record prior to the Trojan war? or from the Romans who had scarcely begun to be a people when the empire of Jerusalem was destroyed and the whole nation reduced to captivity?"§ Such profane testimony as can be produced serves only to show what was the prevailing opinion among heathens; and when we find them not only recording many of the facts in the narrative of Moses, but speaking of him by name, and referring to his law, we conclude that no doubt was entertained that he was the lawgiver of the Jews, or that his writings were genuine. Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Tacitus, Juvenal, and Longinus make mention of him and his writings, in the same manner as we appeal to Cicero and his works.

It is the interest of infidels to bring into doubt the genuineness of the Pentateuch: but, having no solid argument to advance, they endeavour to gain their end by assertions, conjectures, and cavils. We can easily see the design with which such men as Hobbes and Spinoza have maintained that the books commonly ascribed to Moses are called his, not because they were written by him, but because they treat of him and his actions. But this opinion has been adopted by some professed Christians, and particularly by two persons well known to theological scholars, the celebrated critic Father Simon, and the not less celebrated Le Clerc. But while they agree in denying that the Pentateuch is the genuine work of Moses, they differ in the grounds of their opinion, and Le Clerc labours to prove that the arguments of Simon are false. His own views of the subject were truly singular. He supposed that the Pentateuch was drawn up by the priest who was sent from Babylon to instruct, in the manner of the god of the land, the new inhabitants whom the king of Assyria had planted in the room of the Israelites; and that with a view to reclaim these from idolatry, he undertook to give them a history of the creation and of the Jews to the giving of the law; from which it would appear that there was only one God, and that it was he whom the Israelites worshipped. The priests in Jerusalem, he adds, would approve of the work, finding nothing in it but what was pious and true; and the Samaritans would receive it, because it came from a person whom they did not suspect. This hypothesis has the character of boldness, but I do not see that there is any other quality to recommend it. It is conjectural, improbable, and contrary, not only to the uniform belief of the whole Jewish nation, but also to the testimony of inspiration. He endeavours to support it by an induction of particulars collected from the books which he pretends to be of such a nature that they could not have been written by Moses himself, and therefore prove that the books are falsely ascribed to him. To this objection a satisfactory answer has been returned by different authors, and particularly by Witsius, in the fourteenth chapter of the first book of his Dissertation *de Prophetis et Prophetia*. It is easy to show that some of the particulars might have been written by Moses, and that others which betray a later hand might have been added for illustration when places had changed their names, and certain facts had ceased to be known. "A small addition to a book," it has been observed, "does not destroy either the genuineness or the authenticity of the whole book."* It is probable that Clericus hastily adopted this opinion; it is certain that on mature reflection, he renounced it,† and acquiesced in the common belief of Jews and Christians, which is confirmed by the testimony of our Lord and his apostles, that the first five books of the Bible were written by Moses.

In corroboration of the historical evidence we may establish the point by reasoning founded on the circumstances of the case. When we affirm that the writings of Moses are genuine, he who denies the assertion is bound to assign his reasons for dissenting from the common opinion. If, however, he shall devolve on us the burden of proof, we would ask him, Since you allege that they were of a more recent date, at what time were they composed and published? Did they appear immediately after the death of Moses? Their contents were true or false. Suppose that they were true,—by which supposition only can we account for their having been received by men who were contemporaries of Moses and witnesses of many of the facts which are related,—in this case, the argument in favour of the Jewish religion is precisely the same as if they had been written by Moses himself. But let us suppose them to be false,—and it is solely with a design to create a suspicion of this kind, that any infidel is anxious to prove them not to be genuine,—it was impossible, if they were false, that they could have obtained any credit; because, in this case, every person was a competent judge whether the things related to have taken place within his own memory had really happened. The Israelites would not have believed that the Red Sea was divided to afford them a passage; that they had journeyed for forty years in the wilderness; that during all that time a miraculous cloud had covered them by day, and a fire had illuminated their dwellings by night; that they had been supplied with food which

* 2 Chron. xxx, 16 † 2 Chron. xvii. 9.
‡ 1 Kings ii. 3. ‖ Joshua xxii. 6.
§ Vol. i. p. 32.

* Bishop Watson's Apol. for the Bible, Letter iii.
† Cleric. Prolegom. in Pentateuch. Dissert. iii. *de Scriptore Pentateuchi.*

daily fell around their camp; that God had published his law with an audible voice, and punished the violation of it with terrible plagues; they would not have believed these things if the whole narrative had been a fiction. It would have excited their ridicule as a clumsy and monstrous romance; or their indignation, as an audacious attempt to wreathe a yoke about their necks which they were not able to bear. It is morally impossible that the books of Moses could have been received in the age immediately after his death, if their contents had been false; and highly improbable, that although true, they would have been considered as his writings if they had been set forth by some other person in his name, and had not appeared till he was lying in his grave. In either case, but particularly in the first, they would have been rejected by universal consent, and would have long since disappeared; and it is probable that at this distance of time it would not have been known that such an imposition had ever been attempted.

But the objector may pretend that the Pentateuch was published as the genuine work of Moses at a later period, when there was none to contradict its statements from personal experience. Let us assume this hypothesis. It is acknowledged that forged writings have been repeatedly palmed upon the world, and in some cases with temporary success. It is obviously impossible to say positively that in no case the design has completely succeeded; but there have been so many instances of detection as to render it probable that no imposition of this kind has ultimately eluded discovery. Forged writings have usually been of such a nature as not materially to affect the interests of mankind at large; literary productions, for example, under the venerable name of some ancient author. We have no example of a forged code of laws brought to light after a long interval, and passed upon a nation as the work of their ancient legislators, which they were bound to adopt as the rule of their civil and political institutions. It is certain that any attempt of the kind would fail. The man would be laughed at who should come forward and say, "These are the laws of this country, enacted many ages ago, which have hitherto lain in obscurity. I call upon you to abolish your present institutions, and henceforth to regulate your affairs by this new system." The well-known saying of the English barons, *Nolumus leges Angliæ mutari*, is expressive of the common feeling of men, who are attached to the existing laws by habit as well as by the experience of the benefit resulting from them: and are averse to hazard a change, when property, liberty, and personal safety are concerned. The Israelites would have received with astonishment the proposal to submit to a new code of laws stamped with the venerated name of Moses, their ancient deliverer. If they had listened to it with patience, they would have demanded proof that the laws had emanated from him, or from God by his ministry; we cannot conceive that they would have implicitly acquiesced, unless we should suppose them to have been first deprived of reason and common sense. "How does it appear," they would have said, "that these are the genuine laws of the man with whose name they are sanctioned? If they are really his laws, how came it to pass that our fathers did not observe them, and knew nothing about them? In what archives were they deposited? In what secret place have they so long lain concealed? How came you to discover them? And what evidence do you produce to convince us that they were not fabricated by yourself?" To these questions the impostor could have returned no answer,—none, at least, which would have persuaded the people that they were bound to comply with his request. There is a manifest impossibility that the writings of Moses could have been imposed on the Israelites as his genuine productions in any posterior age. Men were not simpletons then, any more than they are at present. They had their senses as well as we; they were as much alive to their interests; they were as much the creatures of habit, as tenacious of their rights, as unwilling to be deceived. The argument becomes stronger when we attend to the nature of the laws, which, according to the hypothesis, were imposed upon the Israelites. They enjoined a cumbersome and expensive ritual; they prescribed usages which separated them from all other nations and exposed them to reproach; they required them not to till their ground once in seven years, and every fiftieth year to give liberty to their slaves and restore mortgaged lands to the original proprietors; they commanded all the males thrice a year to repair to the place of solemn worship, and thus leave the country open to the invasion of their enemies. These laws, so contrary to human policy, so fraught with danger upon the principles of common prudence, no nation would have received on the ground of a mere pretence that they were delivered by a legislator who had, many years before, been laid in the grave. Upon the whole, it is evident, to the satisfaction of every candid mind, that the laws of Moses, and the books in which they are contained, could never have obtained credit among his countrymen if they had not been published in his own lifetime, and supported by those proofs of his divine mission which this is not the proper time to consider.

I have dwelt so long upon the books of Moses, because it is of the greatest importance to ascertain their genuineness. In them the foundation was laid of the ancient dispensation, as they contain the laws and ordinances which, we believe, were significant of a better economy, and by the observance of which the Jews were distinguished as the peculiar people of God. They are introductory to the other books of the Old Testament; and if the former are admitted, there will be little difficulty in acknowledging the latter.

The book of Joshua is understood to have been written by himself, with the exception of a few verses in the end, giving an account of his death, and it is afterwards quoted under his name. It gives an account of the invasion of Canaan, the conquest of its inhabitants, and the division of the land. The book of Judges is attributed to Samuel, who most probably wrote also the book of Ruth, which may be considered as a supplement to it, although others have ascribed it, on what grounds I know not, to Hezekiah or to Ezra. Samuel is also supposed to have written the first twenty-four chapters of the book which bears his name, and by us is divided into two; the rest being added by the prophets Gad and Nathan. This opinion is founded upon the following words in the first book of Chronicles:—"Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer."* With regard to the two books of Kings, they are supposed to have been made up from annals or histories composed by different persons, of which mention is made in the Chronicles; as the acts of Solomon by Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo; the acts of Rehoboam by Iddo and Shemaiah; the acts of Jehoshaphat by Jehu; and the acts of Hezekiah by Isaiah. Perhaps the compilation was the work of Ezra; by whom, too, it is probable that the materials of the two books of Chronicles were collected and arranged. There is little doubt that the two books which follow in order were written by the persons after whom they are called; the one by Ezra, and the other by Nehemiah. The book of Esther is so designated, not because she was the author of it, but because it relates the history of that singular woman, and the deliverance which, through her means, the Jews obtained from the power of their enemies. It has been ascribed to Ezra, to

* 1 Chron. xxix. 29.

Mordecai, or to the distinguished persons who lived at that time, and are known by the title of the Great Synagogue. The truth of the facts which it relates is established by the feast of Purim, which was instituted in commemoration of them, and has been ever since celebrated by the Jews.

Some consider the book of Job as a fiction of the parabolical kind, as a dramatic work founded on tradition, as an allegory, representing the sufferings and deliverance of the Jews; and assign to it a comparatively recent date. It is manifestly a true history; but by whom it was drawn up, is not certainly known. There are endless disputes upon this subject; and while some attribute it to one author and some to another, the most common opinion is, that it was the work of Job himself, or of Moses.

The book of Psalms bears the name of David, solely, however, because a considerable part of it was composed by him. It contains the poetical compositions of different persons, some of which were written before and others after his time. We do not know by whom they were collected; but the probability is in favour of Ezra, who, according to the tradition of the Jews, revised and corrected the text of the Sacred Writings.

The books attributed to Solomon are three, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs; and they are generally admitted to be genuine. Grotius, indeed, is of opinion, that Ecclesiastes is a pious and moral composition of more recent times, published in the name of Solomon, and on the subject of his repentance:* but his skepticism is of no value in opposition to uninterrupted tradition. Gibbon has adopted his opinion, and affirmed that "Ecclesiastes and the Proverbs display a larger compass of thought and experience than seem to belong either to a Jew or a king."† But this is an assumption without proof. Gibbon has assigned no reason why a Jew, without supposing him to be inspired, might not have known as much of human nature as a man of any other nation; nor shown how it was impossible that a king endowed with talents of the first order, and devoted to study, should have acquired an intimate and extensive acquaintance with life and manners. The criticism is unworthy of attention. Is is an arbitrary decision founded upon an arbitrary standard.

Next in order are the prophetical books, about the writers of which there is no uncertainty, as their names are prefixed to their respective works. Their genuineness, like that of any other books, is ascertained by competent testimony, namely, the testimony of those among whom they appeared, and who were particularly interested in them. They have always been assigned to the persons whose names they bear. It has been represented or affirmed that they were written after the events which they pretend to foretell. This charge was brought by Porphyry, the noted adversary of Christianity in the third century, against the prophecies of Daniel, which relate so particularly the transactions of the successors of Alexander the Great in Syria and Egypt, that the whole seems to be rather a narrative than a prediction. But, besides that the date is ascertained by unquestionable testimony, the charge is repelled by the fact that the books contain prophecies which, without all doubt, were not fulfilled till after the time when they are known to have existed. There are predictions in the book of Daniel respecting the Roman empire which have been accomplished since the days of Porphyry.

You must have remarked, that nothing certain is known concerning the writers of some parts of the Old Testament: but our ignorance in this point does not impair their credit, because they have been received by the Jews as authentic records of the transactions related in them; and their testimony will appear to be of great weight, if we attend to the circumstances in which it was delivered. Whether the books of Moses were human or divine compositions, we know that they believed them to be inspired; and, under this impression they would be very careful what other books they admitted to complete the standard of their faith and practice. Every compesition would not obtain this honour; not even every composition which could claim as its author a person of distinguished wisdom and piety. It is altogther incredible that, while they looked upon the first books as a revelation of the will of God, and were warned in them against hastily recognising new claims to a divine mission, they would make up their canon in a careless manner, and give a place in it to writings of a doubtful origin, or coming from persons without authority. Although some of the writers are unknown to us, they were known to them. A few of the books are anonymous, but not suppositious. Their contemporaries were acquainted with the authors, and fully assured that the works ascribed to them were genuine. They would not have ranked them with the books of Moses and the prophets, or those whom they considered as prophets, unless they had been satisfied that the authors had a similar commission and similar qualifications. We have all the evidence which the case admits, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are genuine.

This reasoning is corroborated by the fact that the Jews did not admit books into their canon indiscriminately, but received some and rejected others; thus showing that there were certain principles upon which they proceeded in judging of their claims. We have a proof, that in order to the reception of a book, it was deemed necessary that its genuineness should be ascertained. At a latter period of their history, books appeared which where dignified with the names of some of the most celebrated persons of their country, as Solomon, Daniel, Ezra, and Baruch. But they were not imposed upon by the titles. It was understood that these were not the real authors; and hence, although they might be read, they never obtained any authority among the Jews.

I shall conclude with a few remarks upon the Apocryphal books, which are the following:—two books of Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Esther, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Song of the Three Children, the History of Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, the prayer of Manasses, and four books of the Maccabees.—Of these the church of Rome acknowledges as canonical only Tobit, Judith, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, the first and second book of the Maccabees, Baruch, with the additions to Esther and Daniel. It is certain, as I have already stated, that they were not acknowledged by the Jews, so as to be classed with the books which they held sacred. For this we have the express testimony of Josephus, who, having enumerated the canonical Scriptures, informs us that there were other books containing an account of the transactions of the nation, which were not reputed of equal authority, because they were written after the succession of prophets had ceased; and that it was a proof of the reverence of the Jews for the canonical books, that, during the long interval which had elapsed since their publication, no person had dared to add to them, or to take from them, or to make any alteration in them.* In this stage of the inquiry, we are not at liberty to quote the New Testament as any thing higher than human authority; but as it was written by Jews, it may be fairly considered as expressive of the sentiments of the nation respecting the records of their religion. Now it is re-

* Annot. ad Vet. Test. † Gibbon's Hist. ch. xli. note 33.

* Joseph. cont. Apion. Lib. i.

markable, that the Apocryphal books are never cited by Christ or his apostles. We cannot, indeed, produce quotations from all the acknowledged books of the Old Testament: but while there are references to the greater part of them, they are all recognised under the general division into the law, the prophets, and the holy writings. It is impossible to account for the total silence respecting the Apocryphal books, but upon the principle that the writers of the gospels and epistles did not regard them as possessed of sufficient authority to be appealed to in matters of religion. Some of them were originally written in Greek, and consequently not in Judea, where a different language was spoken after as well as before the captivity; and others are said to have been written in Chaldaic, but about this point learned men are not agreed. We need not be surprised that they were rejected by the Jews, when we consider their contents. They contain fabulous accounts, and are chargeable with contradictions, which render them unworthy of a place among the records of their faith. It is unnecessary to say any thing farther about them. Their exclusion from the canon by the Jews places them on a level with other human compositions. I have only to add, that it is a proof of the stupidity as well as the impiety of the church of Rome, that she has presumed to elevate them to equal honour with the writings of Moses and the prophets, in defiance of the judgment of the Jewish, and I may add, of the ancient Christian church. They were not admitted into the catalogues drawn up by individuals, or by councils, for several centuries; and were regarded as inferior to the writings which are accounted inspired till the meeting of the council of Trent, which established error, idolatry, and superstition, by law. In what esteem they were held in the days of Jerome, we learn when he says, "As the church reads Judith, Tobit, and the books of the Maccabees, but does not receive them among the canonical Scriptures, so let us read Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon, for the edification of the people, but not for the confirmation of doctrines."*

LECTURE V.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

Genuineness of Books of the New Testament: Account of the Gospels; The Epistles of Paul; The Epistle to the Hebrews; The Catholic Epistles; The Revelation of John—Apocryphal Writings—Lost Writings—Importance of the Inquiry into the Genuineness of the Holy Scriptures—Ground on which we believe them to be genuine.

I PROCEED to inquire into the genuineness of the books of the New Testament. I have already pointed out, in general, the importance of this inquiry in reference to the sacred writings. There are many books of which it does not concern us at all to know the authors, and every purpose of information and amusement may be gained, although we should remain in ignorance of their origin. When we read a romance, or fictitious story, we are pleased with the scenes and characters which it describes, and feel a wish to know by whom it was composed, only that our curiosity may be gratified, or that we may fix our admiration and gratitude upon the person to whom they are due. A treatise upon science which is distinguished by the accuracy of its observations, the exactness of its arrangements, and the clearness of its demonstrations, stands in need of no name to recommend it, but rests upon its own intrinsic merits. Even an anonymous narrative of facts may be authentic, because it is understood from collateral evidence to be a faithful record of transactions, and has always been received as such by competent judges. But in the case of laws which are obligatory only because they emanated from a particular source, and of facts which could not be ascertained but by contemporary testimony, and with which our highest interests are inseparably connected, the question of genuineness is of primary importance, and can alone decide whether we shall give credit to the facts, and submit to the laws.

The truth of this observation will be more evident, if the facts are of a supernatural order; for, being out of the usual course of nature, they require more particular proof, and refusing to listen to vague reports, we call for the testimony of eyewitnesses. An account drawn up in a subsequent age is liable to the suspicion of imposture. I shall give you, as an example, the story of the miracles of Apollonius of Tyana, a famous magician, who flourished towards the end of the first century, and was pronounced to be not so properly a philosopher, as an intermediate being between the gods and men. The design of the heathens was to confront his miracles with those of our Saviour, and to prove that Apollonius was equal or superior to him. He was represented as understanding all languages, although he had not learned them; as knowing the language of beasts, and the speech of the gods. Wonderful works were ascribed to him, which appear to us perfectly ridiculous; as that he discovered at Ephesus the pestilence in the form of an old and tattered beggar, and commanded the people to stone him; and being present at a marriage, detected the bride to be one of those malevolent spirits who were called Lamiæ, Larvæ, or Lemures: but they were considered by his admirers as undoubted proofs of divine power. It is true that such a man existed, and imposed upon the credulity of the vulgar by juggling tricks; but the credit of his miracles is destroyed by the fact, that the record was not drawn up by any person who witnessed them, or lived at the time when the account might have been subjected to a strict examination, but by Philostratus and Hierocles, of whom the one flourished in the third, and the other in the fourth century. The first account did not appear till near two hundred years after his death, when the author was at liberty to say what he pleased. Hence you perceive, that the question respecting the genuineness of the writings of the New Testament is connected with their authenticity. The subject of inquiry is, whether they were written in the age when Jesus Christ is said to have appeared, and to have performed the miracles which are ascribed to him, or were composed and published at a subsequent period. I shall proceed to give you an account of the books.

I begin with the gospel of Matthew. That he was the writer of this book, and that it was the first which appeared, are facts supported by the uniform testimony of antiquity. With respect to the time of its publication, there has been a considerable diversity of opinion. It has been assigned by some to the year 61, 62, 63, or 64; by others, to the year 41, 43, or 48; and by others, to the year 37, or 38. As there is nothing in the book itself, or in the writings of the early Christians, by which the date can be settled, we must content ourselves with probability; and there appears to be considerable force in the reasoning of Bishop Tomline, who prefers the year 38. "It appears very improbable that the Christians should be left any considerable number of years without a written history of our Saviour's ministry. It is certain that the apostles, immediately after the descent of the Holy Ghost, which took place only ten days after the ascension of our Saviour into heaven, preached the Gospel to the Jews with great success; and surely it is reasonable to suppose that an authentic account to our Saviour's doctrines and miracles would very soon be committed to writing for the confirmation of those who believed in his divine mission, and for the conversion of others." "We may

* Præf. in Lib. Salomi.

conceive that the apostles would be desirous of losing no time in writing an account of the miracles which Jesus performed, and of the discourses which he delivered, because the sooner such an account was published, the easier it would be to inquire into its truth and accuracy; and, consequently, when these points were satisfactorily ascertained, the greater would be its weight and authority."* There has been much controversy, in modern times, concerning the language in which this gospel was written. By the ancients, Papias, Irenæus, and Origen, and by others who followed them, it was said to have been written in Hebrew; but many learned men contend that the original was Greek. Much credit is not due to the testimony of Papias, who was a weak and credulous man. The works of Irenæus have been understood to import, that besides the Greek, Matthew published also a Hebrew gospel. Origen, in some passages, seems to proceed upon the supposition, that if Matthew wrote in Hebrew, he wrote also in Greek. To reconcile the opposite opinions, we may say, that Matthew published his gospel both in Hebrew, or the mixed dialect which then bore that name, and in Greek: in Hebrew, for the use of the Jews living in Judea, to whom that language was vernacular; and in Greek, for the use of Jews and Gentiles in other countries. Or we may reconcile them by supposing that his gospel was translated into Hebrew, and as it was generally believed to have been designed for the inhabitants of Judea, in process of time the translation was mistaken for the original. It is altogether improbable that this single book should have been written in Hebrew, or in Hebrew alone, while all the rest are in Greek; and if it be inspired, as Christians believe, that there should exist only a version by an unknown hand, of whose competence and fidelity we have no assurance. If it were a mere translation, I do not see that any dependence could be placed upon it, except so far as it agrees with the other accounts.

The next gospel was written by Mark, who is commonly supposed to be the sister's son of Barnabas, and was called first John, and afterwards Mark; but some have entertained doubts whether this was the person. He was not an apostle, but is said to have been the constant attendant of Peter, and to have composed his narrative with his approbation. The following account is given by Eusebius. He tells us, that Peter having preached at Rome, the people were so pleased with his instructions, that they anxiously desired to have them in writing; that by their earnest entreaties they prevailed upon Mark to draw up a memoir of them; and that Peter approved of what was done, and authorized the writing to be introduced into the churches.† It was even sometimes called the gospel of Peter, because it was believed that he had revised it and given it his sanction. These traditions are not absolutely certain; but there is universal consent respecting the publication of the book at an early period, and the name of the author. According to Eusebius and others, it appeared at Rome; but others assign to it a different place, Alexandria in Egypt. It is not so certain as is commonly supposed, that the apostle Peter was ever in Rome; but if we admit, upon the authority of antiquity, that he did preach in that city, and that the occasion of writing this gospel was such as has been related, it is probable that the date should be fixed somewhere about the year 60. It is the voice of antiquity that it was written in Greek; but some authors in the Romish church have maintained that the original was Latin; and give this reason for their opinion, that, as it was drawn up for the use of the Romans, it must have been presented to them in their own language. But the argument proves too much, and therefore proves nothing; for it is acknowledged by all, that the epistle sent by Paul to the Romans was not written in Latin, but in Greek. It was long asserted that the original in Latin was preserved in Venice; but it has been discovered that it is the fragment of a manuscript, which has no pretension to be the autograph of the evangelist. It has been affirmed that the gospel of Mark is a mere abridgment of the gospel of Matthew, and consequently is not an independent testimony to the facts of the evangelical history. But although this notion has obtained currency, it has been proved by different persons, and particularly by Mr. Jones in his work on the canon, to be without foundation. There is a resemblance between the two gospels, but at the same time, there is such a difference as shows that they are both original compositions. "For the most part the accounts by Mark are much more large and full, and related with many more particular circumstances than the same accounts are by Matthew." "The disagreement which seems to be between the two evangelists in relating several circumstances of their history, is a clear and demonstrative evidence that the one did not abridge or copy the other." "Lastly, Mark's gospel is not an epitome of Matthew's, because he has related several very considerable histories of which there is not the least mention made by Matthew."*

The writer of the third gospel was Luke, who is supposed to have been a native of Antioch, descended from Jewish parents, and by profession a physician. What is most certain is, that he was the companion of Paul in his travels, and a witness of many of the things which he relates concerning that apostle in the Acts. The time when he published his gospel is not ascertained, some referring it to the year 53, and others to the year 63, or 64; and so also is the place, there being no evidence to determine whether it was written in Achaia, or Syria, or Palestine. All antiquity agrees in ascribing it to Luke. The superiority of the style, which approaches nearer to the classical standard, has given rise to the idea that he had been better educated than the other evangelists. The occasion of writing his gospel is thus stated by himself. "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me, also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed."† These words might almost lead us to think that the gospel of Luke was the first, were it not for the unanimous testimony of antiquity to the contrary. It was natural that the Christians should be desirous to have an accredited account of the actions and sayings of our Lord: and this would be an inducement to different individuals to come forward with their narratives. It is true that the gospels of Matthew and Mark were already in circulation; but some of the accounts might have appeared before them; and even after those gospels were published, the curiosity or the wishes of the public would not be immediately satisfied, as copies could not be so rapidly multiplied as they now are by the press, and there was still room for the labours of others. But, as it happens in cases of this kind, their narratives would be imperfect, and, it may be, inaccurate. Luke, indeed, does not directly charge them with unfaithfulness or mistake, but speaks of them merely as "declarations of the things which were believed among Christians," founded on the report of eyewitnesses. It is evident, however, that he considered his new narrative as called for; and he seems to intimate, when he

* Introduct. to the study of the Bible, part ii. chap. ii.
† Euseb. Hist. lib. ii c. 14, 15.

* Jones on the Canon, vol. iii, pp. 56. 70. 79.
† Luke. i. 1—4.

says that he "had a perfect understanding," or had accurately traced "all things from the first," that his information was more extensive and correct.

The last gospel, it is acknowledged by all the ancients, was written by John. He was one of the sons of Zebedee, is frequently mentioned in the evangelical history, and is distinguished from the other apostles as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." We may conceive him, therefore, while employed in compiling this book, not only to have obeyed the impulse of inspiration, but to have experienced the melting tenderness of heart with which a person records the actions and sayings of a friend. While his thoughts were elevated to Jesus Christ reigning on the throne of heaven, he could not but remember that this was he with whom he had lived on familiar terms, and on whose bosom he was once permitted to lean. It is peculiar to this gospel that it gives us the name of the writer, or what is equivalent, refers to the well-known affection which subsisted between him and our Saviour; while the names of the other evangelists are known only by tradition. "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things."* The date of it is as uncertain as that of the other gospels. Some have assigned the year 68, 69, or 70; and as a proof that it was prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, these words have been appealed to: "Now there is at Jerusalem, by the sheep-market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue, Bethesda, having five porches."† He does not say there *was*, but there *is* such a pool. There are some authorities in favour of ην instead of εστι; but not to lay any stress upon these, we may remark that, although the walls and houses of Jerusalem were demolished, the pool might remain, and the porches might have been left standing to afford accommodation to the Roman garrison, and to others who occasionally visited the ruins; so that the mention of it, as in existence, determines nothing respecting the date of the gospel. Notwithstanding this passage, it is by many considered as posterior to the fall of the holy city, and supposed to have been written about the year 97, after John had returned from Patmos, to which he was banished by the emperor Domitian.

If this be the true date, the apostle must have been very old. It is probable that he was about the same age with our Lord; and since his ascension, between sixty and seventy years had elapsed. In other words, the year 97 marks both his age and the date of his book. I add, that if we adopt this date, the gospel is the last book of the New Testament, and not the Revelation, as is commonly thought. John is reported to have spent much of his time during the latter part of his life in Asia Minor, and it is the general opinion that his gospel was published there. The narrative is in a great measure new: he omits most of the facts which are mentioned by the other evangelists, and relates particulars which they have left out; and hence it would seem that his narrative appeared after theirs, and was intended to be supplementary to them. We are informed, too, by Irenæus, Jerome, and others, that one important design which he had in view, was to confute the erroneous dogmas of various heretics, the Ebionites, the Cerinthians, and the Nicolaitans, concerning the person of Christ. Accordingly, while Matthew, Mark, and Luke begin with an account of his human birth, the gospel of John opens with a solemn testimony to his pre-existence and divinity. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."‡ The subject is repeatedly brought forward more fully and explicitly than by the other evangelists. Eusebius quotes the words of Clement of Alexandria to the following effect, "that John, the last of the evangelists, observing that corporeal things had been explained in the other gospels, and being impelled by his acquaintances, and moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual gospel."* With respect to the composition in general, Dr. Campbell says that it bears marks more signal than any of the gospels, that it is the work of an illiterate Jew;† and other critics have remarked upon the homeliness and inaccuracy of the style. On the other hand, Michaelis has pronounced the style to be better than that of the other gospels, and ascribes this superiority to the skill in the Greek language, which the apostle had acquired by a long residence in Ephesus."‡ In such uncertainty are we left, when we depend upon the opinions of others. It is somewhat strange that so distinguished a scholar should prefer the style of John to that of Luke.

Irenæus, in his work *Adversus Hæreses*, has assigned reasons why there are four gospels, and there could not be more. You will readily anticipate that they are fanciful, and will be convinced that they deserve this character when you hear that these are two of them;—there are four regions of the world in which the gospel was to be preached, and the cherubims between whom Jesus Christ sits had each four faces. We cannot tell why four were published, and not three only; but we may safely suppose the reason for more than one to have been, that at the mouth of two or three witnesses, the history of our Lord might be established.

If the gospel of Luke is acknowledged to be genuine, it follows that he was the writer of the Acts of the Apostles. This appears from the introduction to the latter book. "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up."‖ As the two treatises were composed by the same author, and addressed to the same person, it has been supposed that they were drawn up and published at the same time. At any rate, if the date which we have assigned to his gospel be correct, the interval between its appearance and the publication of the Acts could not be long. The history in the Acts comes down to the end of the two years of Paul's imprisonment at Rome; soon after which, he was set at liberty in the year 63. It is probable, that about this time, this second treatise was sent to Theophilus. You will observe that Luke gives no account of the martyrdom of Paul; undoubtedly because he composed this narrative before it; and it is understood, that after having enjoyed his liberty for a short period, the apostle was again brought before the tribunal of Nero, and condemned. The design of Luke was not to give a complete account of the propagation of the gospel, but to show that in obedience to the command of our Saviour, it was published first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. Accordingly, having recorded the events of the day of Pentecost, and some subsequent proceedings of the apostles in Jerusalem and Samaria, he enters upon the history of Paul, and sets before us a summary of the labours of that zealous and indefatigable servant of Christ among the Gentiles. With the exception of Peter and John, we hear little or nothing of the other apostles, although there can be no doubt that they were equally faithful and diligent in publishing the religion of their divine Master.

I proceed to speak of the epistles which have been divided into two classes, the epistles of Paul, and the Catholic epistles. Those of Paul are fourteen in number, but are not placed in our Bibles in the order in which they were written. The epistle to the Romans stands first, because it was addressed to the inhabitants of the capital; and then follow two epistles to the Christians of Corinth, a large and flourishing city of Greece. If they had been arranged according to their respective dates, the two epistles of the Thessalonians

* John xxi. 24. † John v. 2. ‡ John i. 1.

* Hist. lib. vi. c. xiv.
† Campbell on the Gospels, Preface to John.
‡ Marshe's Michaelis, vol. iii. p. 16. ‖ Acts i. 1.

would have stood first, because they preceded all the rest. The epistles of James and Jude, the two epistles of Peter, and the three of John, were called Catholic, because they are not addressed to particular churches and individuals, but to Christians in every part of the world. But there is an obvious error in this statement; the second and third epistles of John ought to have been excluded from the number, since the former is addressed to a person whom he calls the elect lady, or, as some think, the Lady Eclecta, and the latter to Gaius. Even then, the classification would have been inaccurate. The first epistle of Peter is addressed to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia; not to the whole society of Christians in the world, but to that part of them which resided in those countries; and the epistle of James was sent to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, and consequently, is not more catholic than the epistle to the Hebrews. Thus you see, that this ancient division of the epistles is destitute of any foundation.

There is no difficulty in ascertaining the writer of the epistles which are ascribed to Paul, because he gives his name in the superscription, and sometimes introduces it towards the end. Thus, he says, in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, "The salutation of Paul, with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write."* It appears, that for some cause not mentioned, perhaps because his handwriting was not good, he commonly employed an amanuensis; not always, however, for he says to the Galatians, "Ye see how large a letter I have written to you with mine own hand."† But when he did use the pen of another, he wrote the salutation himself to authenticate the epistle, or that those to whom it was sent might be satisfied that it was genuine.

It is not my business at present to give a summary of the contents of the epistles; and I shall satisfy myself with a brief notice of the time when each is supposed to have been written. The most probable date of the Epistle to the Romans is the year 57 or 58. The first Epistle to the Corinthians, was written in the year 56 or 57, and the second in the following year. It has been made a question, whether Paul wrote any other epistle to the Corinthians, and it is founded upon these words in his first epistle, "I wrote to you in an epistle, not to keep company with fornicators."‡ Learned men are divided in opinion, some contending that there was an epistle which has not been preserved, and others that he refers to the epistle which he was at that moment writing. There is no doubt that the apostles wrote many letters which are not in existence, and might not be intended for the general use of the church; but tradition makes mention of only two epistles to the Corinthians, although the words naturally suggest that there was another which has not come down to us. The date of the Epistle to the Galatians is very uncertain, and it has been assigned almost to every year between 48 and 52. The Epistle to the Ephesians was written during his imprisonment in Rome, probably in the year 61. Some learned men have contended that this epistle was sent, not to the Ephesians, but to the Laodiceans. The reasons which they give are so insufficient, that we cannot conceive how any person of discernment should have been satisfied with them. Paul says to the Colossians, "When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."‖ But how this passage proves the point, it is not very easy to see. It is not a clear inference, that an epistle *from* Laodicea is an epistle which Paul had sent *to* Laodicea. We do not know what it was; it may have been a letter from the Laodiceans to Paul, about matters in which the Colossians were concerned, and of which, therefore, he transmitted a copy to them. There is certainly not the slightest evidence that it was the epistle to the Ephesians. It is not so called in a single manuscript, and Ephesus is named as the place to which it was sent, in all manuscripts now extant, except one in which it is omitted. The Epistle to the Philippians was written while Paul was a prisoner in the year 62 or 63; and the same date may be assigned to the Epistle to the Colossians. The two epistles to the Thessalonians were earlier, and were written about the year 52. There is much dispute about the date of the first Epistle to Timothy, which has been fixed to the years 57 and 64. The second was written while Paul was in bonds, but whether during his first or second imprisonment, is doubtful. It has been referred to the year 65. It is not known when, or where, the Epistle to Titus was composed; and several years have been mentioned from 52 to 65. Paul was in Rome when he sent his letter to Philemon, and probably wrote it in the year 62.

Of the epistles of Paul, there remains only to be considered that which is addressed to the Hebrews. But, although its antiquity is acknowledged, its genuineness has been disputed, on account, not only of the omission of the name, but of the difference of the style. Jerome says, in his catalogue of ecclesiastical writers, that it was believed not to be Paul's, because the style was different; and that it was attributed to Barnabas, to Luke, or to Clement, bishop of Rome, who arranged and expressed, in his own words, the sentiments of Paul. Some thought that Paul wrote in Hebrew, and that another person translated it into Greek. Origen affirms, that the epistle does not exhibit the simple and humble form of speech which is usual to Paul, but is composed in purer Greek; that the sentiments, however, are admirable, and not inferior to those of his acknowledged epistles. "I would say," he adds, "that the sentiments are Paul's; but that the language is that of another person, who committed them to writing; but who wrote the epistle, God only knows."* At the same time, he admits that it may be received as an epistle of Paul. It is attributed to him, at an earlier period, by Clemens Alexandrinus, and finally was acknowledged as his production by the Catholic church. Some learned men have denied that there is such a difference of style as warrants the supposition of a different author. There are also internal proofs that it was written by him, consisting in its similarity to his other epistles, in expressions, allusions, and modes of interpreting and applying passages of the Old Testament. It was sent from Italy; and, as he proposed soon to visit the Hebrews, in company with Timothy, then restored to liberty, it must have been written after his own release from prison, in the year 62 or 63.

There remain to be considered the Catholic epistles. The genuineness of them all, with the exception of the first epistle of Peter, and the first of John, was, for a time, called in question by some; but, upon accurate examination, they were finally received as the productions of those to whom they were ascribed. The first, according to the order in our Bibles, is the Epistle of James, who has prefixed his name to it, and addressed it to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. There was another person of this name, who was the brother of John, and was put to death by Herod; but this James was the son of Alpheus, or Cleophas, and is called the brother of our Lord, because he was nearly related to him. He is sometimes called James the Just; this honourable title having been given to him, for the distinguished holiness of his life. He is said to have resided much in Jerusalem, where he wrote this epistle, it is supposed, in the year 61, and suffered martyrdom in the year 62. The first epistle

* 2 Thess. iii. 17.
† Gal. vi. 11.
‡ 1 Cor. v. 9.
‖ Col. iv. 16.

* Quoted by Eusch. Eccl. Hist. lib. vi. c. 25.

of Peter was sent from *Babylon*; but learned men are not agreed what city is meant; some of the ancients supposed, and several of the moderns concur with them in thinking, that it is the mystical Babylon, or the city of Rome. Their reasons I consider as by no means satisfactory. Rome is, indeed, called Babylon in the Revelation of John, but we have no evidence that it had received that name in Peter's time, and still less that it was so common as, without any danger of mistake, to suggest the proper sense to the Christian reader. It is impossible to conceive any reason why, in a plain epistle and a common salutation, Rome should be called Babylon. In whatever place it was written, the epistle is assigned to the year 64. The second epistle seems to have been written not long after, for the apostle signifies that his death was near, which is said to have taken place in the year 65. Although no name is prefixed to the first epistle of John, it was received by the ancient church as genuine, and contains internal evidence that it was written by him, in its striking similarity to his gospel, both in sentiment and in language. Various dates have been assigned to it, from the year 68 to 92. From the expression, "It is the last time,"* it has been inferred, that it was written when the Jewish state was drawing to an end, or shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem; but the expression has been understood of the close of the apostolic age. The second and third epistles have been referred to the year 69. It was some time before they were acknowledged as genuine; and as they were addressed to individuals, it is probable that some time elapsed before they were generally known. Jude, who is also called Lebbæus and Thaddeus, was a son of Alpheus, and like James the Less, the brother or near relative of our Lord. His short epistle, which was addressed to the saints in general, has been assigned to the year 70. The quotation of a prophecy of Enoch, which is not found in the Scriptures, is no argument against the genuineness or the authenticity of the epistle, because it was a true prophecy, in whatever way he came to the knowledge of it. We have no reason to believe that the Apocryphal book, called the prophecy of Enoch, from which some have supposed it to be taken, was then in existence; and we may presume that the forgery was suggested by the passage in Jude.

The last book of the New Testament is the Revelation of John. Its genuineness was called in question by some in the third and the fourth centuries, but it was received at an early period as the work of the apostle. Polycarp, who was his disciple, has cited it once. Justin Martyr, in A. D. 140, acknowledges it as his; and Irenæus, who was the disciple of Polycarp, repeatedly quotes it as the production of John the disciple of the Lord. To these may be added, in the second century, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Apollonius, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, who defends the book against Marcion and his followers. Several objections against the genuineness of the Revelation were advanced by Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, about the middle of the third century, who ascribed it to another John, an elder of the church of Ephesus; but most of them are trifling, and none of them is sufficient to invalidate the testimony in its favour. The suspicions of some were founded on a fancied resemblance between the prediction of the reign of Christ with his saints for a thousand years, and the doctrine of Cerinthus, that our Saviour would establish a kingdom upon earth, in which his subjects would be admitted to the unrestrained enjoyment of carnal delights. We can only wonder at the stupidity of those who confounded things totally different. The Revelation was omitted in several of the catalogues of the canonical books; but the reason seems to have been, that on account of its obscurity, it was not deemed proper to be publicly read. The prophetic visions recorded in it, were seen in Patmos, to which John had been banished by Domitian, and from which he was permitted to return after the death of that emperor. This happened in the year 96, and about that time the book may be dated.

There were many books in former times which pretended to be the productions of the persons to whom the acknowledged books are ascribed. They are so numerous, that it would be a waste of time to go over them all. A few of them remain, but the greater part have perished. I may mention the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel according to the Egyptians, the Gospel of Thomas, the Revelation of Paul, the Revelation of Peter, and some books under the name of Christ. Of all these, nothing is left but the names and a few fragments. But we have still the Gospel of Mary, the Protevangeleum of James, the Gospel of our Saviour's infancy, the Gospel of Nicodemus or the acts of Pilate, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, a Letter of our Lord to Abgarus, king of Edessa, and letters of Paul to Seneca. All these books have been rejected as spurious, because they contain histories and doctrines contrary to those which were known to be true; because the matter is silly, and evidently fabulous; because things are related in them which were posterior to the times in which those lived under whose names they were published; because the style is different from that of the authors to whom they are ascribed; and because they breathe a different spirit from that of the persons by whom they claim to have been written. No mention is made of them by the Christian authors of the first century, Barnabas, Hermas, and Clemens; or by Ignatius and Polycarp, of the second; succeeding writers rarely refer to them, and then speak of them in terms expressive of disrespect; they were forbidden to be read in the churches, and were not appealed to as authorities in matters of doctrine and controversy. They were treated as human compositions, and as forgeries; and those which have survived the wreck, are such wretched compositions, that only the most stupid of mankind could deem them worthy of a place among the books of the New Testament.

The question, Whether any books have been lost? will admit of different answers, according as the question is stated. We have no reason to think that any book which the evangelists or apostles wrote for the permanent use of the church, has disappeared, because no hint of this kind is given by those who, living near their time, had the best opportunities of knowing. Much that was spoken by inspiration was never recorded, for the apostles, we believe, were assisted by the Spirit in preaching as well as in writing; and it is not to be doubted, that they sent letters to individuals and to societies, which did not long survive the occasions which they were intended to serve. There were many prophets under the Jewish dispensation, of whom we have no memorial but their names, although it may be presumed that their predictions were sometimes committed to writing. It is said of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel, "he that restored the coast of Israel, from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher."* Now, here is a prediction which was preserved, but of which there is not a vestige in the Old Testament, till it is incidentally mentioned at the time of its fulfilment. There may have been, and there must have been, many other prophecies written down and fulfilled, of which no trace remains. The gospels contain only a small specimen of the miracles and discourses of our Saviour; the greater part is irrecoverably gone—"The world it-

* 1 John ii. 18.

* 2 Kings xiv. 25.

self could not contain the books which might have been written."* What we contend for is, not that all the writings of the apostles have been transmitted to us, but that those have been preserved which were designed to convey the religion of Christ to succeeding generations. And hence it follows, that although the inference were true, which some have drawn from a passage in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, formerly quoted, that there was another epistle addressed by Paul to that church, which has perished, there would be nothing in the idea to startle us and to disturb our faith, because we have no reason to suppose that all that inspired men wrote was to be preserved, any more than all that they spoke. It is enough that we possess all the books which were considered by the Christians in the early ages, as constituting the perpetual rule of faith and manners to the church.

This historical account of the books of the New Testament is intended to assist us in the inquiry whether they are genuine; an inquiry which may appear to some, but I trust to none of you, to be superfluous, or perhaps impious, because it may be understood to imply a state of mind approaching to infidelity. 'What!' it may be said, 'shall we dare to doubt that the New Testament is the work of the evangelists and apostles?' To this question we would answer, that the inquiry does not proceed from any suspicion, but is instituted for the purpose of satisfying ourselves, or, if we are already satisfied, of convincing others, who are not so well informed, that the books really possess the authority which is commonly ascribed to them. We are bound to give a reason of our faith; and it is particularly incumbent upon those to be able to do so, who are the appointed guardians of religion, and are officially called to defend it against the attacks of its adversaries. The subject, however, does not meet with all the attention which it deserves. There may be ministers of the gospel who are very slightly acquainted with it; and among the private members of the church, it is rare to find any who have thought of it at all. It was long ago observed by Mr. Baxter, that "few Christians among us have any better than the popish implicit faith on this point, nor any better arguments than the papists have, to prove the Scriptures the word of God. They have received it by tradition; godly ministers and Christians tell them so; it is impious to doubt of it; therefore they believe it. Though we could persuade people never so confidently, that Scripture is the very word of God, and yet teach them no more reason why they should believe this than any other book to be that word; as it will prove in them no right way of believing, so it is in us no right way of teaching." "Many ministers never give their people better ground than their own authority, or that of the church, but tell them that it is damnable to deny it, but help them not to the necessary antecedents of faith."†

It has been said, that "we receive the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the only sacred and canonical books, not because the church receives them as such, but because the Holy Ghost witnesses to our consciences that they proceed from God, and themselves testify their authority." Similar assertions have been made by other learned and pious individuals, but they require to be explained. We do not deny that a man may be convinced of the truth of the gospel by internal evidence. He may have the witness in himself, because it has come to him with such power and demonstration, that he could no more doubt that it was the word of God, than if it had been proclaimed by a voice from heaven. Many have firmly believed the truth, and led a holy life, and submitted to death for Christ, who had no other evidence. But observe, that this evidence could go no farther than to satisfy them that those doctrines and promises were from God, by which they were enlightened, sanctified, comforted and inspired with more than human courage, and with the triumphant hope of immortality. How could it convince them that all the books of the Bible are divine? How could it enable them to distinguish, as the French church pretends, between the canonical and the apocryphal books? There is more reason and truth in the words of Baxter:—"For my part, I confess, I could never boast of any such testimony or light of the Spirit, which, without human testimony, would have made me believe that the book of Canticles is canonical, and written by Solomon, and the book of Wisdom apocryphal and written by Philo. Nor could I have known all or any historical books, such as Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, to be written by divine inspiration, but by tradition."

* John xxi. 25.

† Baxter's Saints' Rest, part ii. chap. ii. § 1.

LECTURE VI.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

General Evidence of the Genuineness of the New Testament—Testimony of early Writers; Of early Heretics, and Infidels: The Syriac Version—Force of these Testimonies—Internal Marks of Genuineness; The Style; The nature of the Composition, and Narrative: Discrepancies and Coincidences—Paley's Horæ Paulinæ.

Having given an account of the books of the New Testament, I proceed to lay before you the evidence by which it is proved that they were written by the persons whose names they bear. This work has been already performed with great diligence and learning by different authors, among whom I refer you, in particular, to Jones, in his new and full method of settling the canonical authority of the New Testament; and to Lardner, in the second part of his Credibility of the Gospel History. The subject may be said to have been exhausted by them; and nothing is left to others, but to verify their references by consulting the original authors, or now and then, perhaps, to add a passage which had escaped their observation.

The persons, in the early ages, to whom we are chiefly indebted for information, are Eusebius, Jerome, and Origen, of whom the two former flourished in the fourth century, and the latter in the third. They were all men of great learning, and had devoted their time and talents to the study of the Scriptures. Eusebius has divided the writings, which claimed to be received as a rule of faith and practice to Christians, into three classes.* Those of the first class are the γραφαι ὁμολογουμεναι,† which are the four gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the epistles of Paul, the first epistle of John, and the first epistle of Peter; and to these he says, may be added, if it should seem proper, the Revelation of John. Those of the second class, are the γραφαι αντιλεγομεναι,‡ writings, the genuineness of which was doubted by some. These are the epistle of James, the epistle of Jude, the second epistle of Peter, and the second and third of John, because it was uncertain whether they were written by him, or by another person of the same name. It appears, however, that these books were acknowledged by the majority of Christians. Those of the third class are the γραφαι νοθαι, spurious writings, as the acts of Paul, Andrew, John, and other apostles, and gospels under the names of Peter, Thomas, and Mathias, the epistle of Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermas.

Eusebius distinguishes the spurious from the canoni-

* Euseb. Hist. lib. iii. cap. 25.

† Writings admitted to be genuine.

‡ Contested writings, whose genuineness is disputed.

cal books by two internal marks. The first arises from the style, which is quite different from that of the apostles,—ὁ της φρασεως παρα το ηθος το αποστολικον εναλλαττει χαρακτηρ.* The second is furnished by the sentiments and design, which are at variance with orthodoxy, and show them to be the compositions of heretical men—ἡ τε γνωμη και ἡ των εν αυτοις φερομενων προαιρεσις πλειστον οσον της αληθους ορθοδοξιας απαδουσα.†

Eusebius uses another argument against the spurious books, and it is this; that no ecclesiastical writer, in the succession from the apostles, had deemed them worthy to be mentioned. They are not appealed to as books of authority; they are not quoted as the productions of inspired and apostolical men. Now, by considering this omission as a proof that they are forgeries, Eusebius suggests to us the plan which we should adopt, with a view to ascertain the genuineness of the Scriptures; and it is the plan which was pursued by himself. We must have recourse to those who were contemporaries of the apostles and evangelists, or flourished soon after them, and see whether they knew any thing about the books which are commonly ascribed to them.

The only Christian writers of the first century of whom there are any remains, are Clement, Barnabas, and Hermas. Clement is mentioned in the epistle to the Philippians as a fellow-labourer of Paul, and as one whose name is in the book of life; and he is said, by the ancients, to have been bishop of Rome. There are two epistles under his name, addressed to the church of Corinth, the first of which is generally admitted to be genuine, but suspicions are entertained of the second. Barnabas was the companion of Paul. I should think, that any person who peruses the epistle ascribed to him would be convinced that he was not the author of it, and that it is the composition of another person of the same name, or who assumed his name. It is believed, however, to be a work of the first century; and the same date is assigned to the Pastor or Shepherd of Hermas, who is supposed, although not with good reason, to be the Hermas mentioned in the epistle to the Romans. In the epistle of Clement, there are at least eight quotations from, or allusions to the gospel of Matthew; six to the gospel of Luke; one to the gospel of John; two to the Acts of the Apostles. In the epistle of Barnabas, there are seven to the gospel of Matthew, and one at least to the gospel of John. In the Shepherd of Hermas, there are nine to the gospel of Matthew. I have not mentioned any quotations from Mark, or references to it: and the reason is, that in consequence of the similarity of his gospel to that of Matthew, it is not easy to determine whether some of the passages were cited from the one or from the other.

With these may be joined Ignatius, who was their contemporary, but survived them, and finished his course in the early part of the second century. From an expression in one of his epistles, it has been concluded that he saw Christ in the flesh. He is said to have been appointed bishop of Antioch about thirty-seven years after the ascension; and having continued in office forty years, he suffered martyrdom at Rome. The testimony of such a man is of inestimable value, both because he had the best opportunities of ascertaining what books had come from the original teachers of religion, with several of whom he may be presumed to have been personally acquainted, and because, being a Christian and a bishop, he would be careful not to admit, but upon sufficient grounds, any writing as the rule of his faith. Now, in his epistles we find eight quotations from the gospel of Matthew, one from Luke, and two or three from John.

The next in order is Polycarp, who lived in the first century, and conversed with the apostle John. He was made bishop of Smyrna about the year 94 or 95, and suffered martyrdom in the year 167, having attained a very great age, and served Christ, as he told the judge who condemned him, eighty years. There is extant only one epistle sent by him to the Philippians, in which we cannot expect many quotations. There are, however, six from the gospel of Matthew, and in some fragments two more, and one quotation from the Acts.

Justin, who is commonly called Martyr, because he suffered death for Christ in the year 140, is a more voluminous author, and consequently furnishes many more references to the gospels. There have been collected out of his works, from thirty to forty passages from the gospel of Matthew, nine from the gospel of Luke, five from the gospel of John, and one from the Acts. They are often cited in a book which goes under his name, but it is not believed to be his, and is entitled Questions and Answers to the Orthodox.

In the writings of Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, who flourished from A. D. 179 to A. D. 202, the quotations are numerous. He has taken at least two hundred and fifty passages from Matthew, and several times cited his gospel by name; seven passages from Mark, and names him twice; above one hundred from the gospel of Luke; above one hundred and twenty from the gospel of John; and he very often refers to the Acts. In the book *adversus Hæreses*,* he adopts the fanciful idea, that there could only be four gospels, and assigns fanciful reasons for it; but he mentions them all by name, and gives a summary of their contents.

Quotations are also found in the writings of Athenagoras and Theophilus of Antioch. In the works of Clemens Alexandrinus and Tertullian, they are so frequent, that we do not attempt to specify the number. It has been observed that "there are more and larger quotations of the small volume of the New Testament in the writings of one Christian author, Tertullian, than there are of all the works of Cicero in writers of all characters for several ages."†

Hitherto, I have produced testimonies in favour only of the historical books, the gospels and the Acts. If these are admitted to be genuine, there will not be much dispute about the epistles, which are so closely connected with the scheme unfolded in the writings of the evangelists, being an illustration and continuation of it. Clemens Alexandrinus not only gives an account of the order in which the gospels were written, and cites Luke as the author of the Acts, but quotes almost every book of the New Testament by name. Irenæus, whose means of ascertaining the truth were the best, as he was the disciple of Polycarp, who was the disciple of John, has not only ascribed the four gospels and the Acts to their respective authors, but has acknowledged as canonical and *genuine* the epistle to the Romans, the epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, the first and second epistles to the Thessalonians, the two epistles to Timothy, the epistle to Titus, the two epistles of Peter, and the first and second epistles of John. He has alluded to the epistle to the Hebrews, has quoted the epistle of James, and borne express testimony to the book of Revelation. Justin Martyr not only makes mention of the memoirs of the apostles, and the memoirs of Christ, evidently meaning the gospels, but refers to the Acts, the epistle to the Romans, the first epistle to the Corinthians, the epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, the second epistle to the Thessalonians, the first epistle of Peter, and the book

* The character of the style itself is very different from that of the apostles.

† The sentiments and purport of the things advanced in them, deviate very far from sound orthodoxy.

* Against the Heresies.

† Lardner's Credibility, part ii. chap. 27.

of Revelation. Polycarp alludes to several other books of the New Testament besides the gospels, the epistle to the Romans, the first and second epistles to the Corinthians, the epistle to the Ephesians, the first epistle to Timothy, the first epistle of Peter, and the first epistle of John. In the seven epistles of Ignatius which are supposed to be genuine, there are quotations from, or manifest allusions to the epistle to the Romans, the first and second epistles to the Corinthians, the epistle to the Galatians, the epistle to the Ephesians, the epistle to the Philippians, the epistle to the Colossians, the second epistle to the Thessalonians, the two epistles to Timothy, the epistle to Titus, the epistle to the Hebrews, the epistle of James, and the first epistle of Peter. In the epistle of Clemens Romanus, the following books are cited; the epistle to the Romans, the two epistles to the Corinthians, the epistle to the Philippians, the first epistle to the Thessalonians, the first epistle to Timothy, the epistle to the Hebrews, the epistle of James, the first and second of Peter, and the Revelation. The works of Barnabas and Hermas also contain allusions to several books, but they are less frequent and explicit, because the subject of the epistle of Barnabas led him to refer rather to the Old Testament, and the Shepherd of Hermas is composed in the form of a vision.

It is observable, that the quotations and allusions are sometimes accompanied with the names of the apostles and evangelists, but frequently they are omitted. "This proves," says Paley, speaking of the gospels, "that these books were perfectly notorious, and that there were no other accounts of Christ then extant, or at least, no other so received and credited, as to make it necessary to distinguish these from the rest."* The observation may be applied to the other parts of the New Testament. References to them without any specification of their titles or authors show, that they were well known, that they were considered as standard books, that their sayings were received as authoritative, and consequently, that they were understood to be genuine. And, that they were viewed with respect as writings of a higher order than human compositions, is evident from the terms in which they are spoken of, as Holy Scriptures, Divine Scriptures, Fountains of Truth and Salvation; and also from the fact that they were read in the religious assemblies.

It is unnecessary to pursue this inquiry farther. It is well known that in the third and following centuries, they were regarded as the writings of those under whose names they were current in the world. It is proper, however, to inform you, that catalogues of the books of the New Testament were drawn up by different persons, from which it appears, that the same books were then received which are at present acknowledged.

The first is the catalogue of Origen in the year 210, who omits the epistle of James and Jude, but acknowledges both in other parts of his writings. The second is the catalogue of Eusebius in the year 315, which is the same with ours. He says, however, as you heard before, that a few of the books were disputed by some. The third is the catalogue of Athanasius of the same date, which exactly accords with the modern one. So does the catalogue of Cyril of Jerusalem in A. D. 340,—with an exception as to the Revelation. The catalogue of the Council of Laodicea, A. D. 364, omits the Revelation, but has all the other books. The catalogue of Epiphanius, A. D. 370, agrees with ours; but the Revelation is omitted in that of Gregory Nazianzen, A. D. 375. Philostrius, bishop of Brexia, A. D. 380, leaves out the Revelation, and mentions only thirteen epistles of Paul, excepting, most probably, the epistle to the Hebrews, of which some doubted, but he has all the other books. Jerome, A. D. 382, receives all the books, for, although he speaks doubtfully of the epistle to the Hebrews, he acknowledges it as canonical in other parts of his writings. The catalogues of Ruffinus, A. D. 390, of Augustine, A. D. 394, and of the Council of Carthage in which Augustine was present, are in all respects the same with ours.

Nothing farther is necessary to satisfy us that the books were written at the time assigned for their publication, and by the persons to whom they are ascribed. There seems not, indeed, to have been any doubt relative to this matter in the early ages. It was generally understood from whom the books came, and they were received with as little hesitation as we feel with respect to a book published among us, to which the author has prefixed his name. We have seen that the genuineness of a few of them was called in question, only however by some; but this circumstance supplies new evidence, by showing that proof was required before any of the books was acknowledged. When we find that men are far from being credulous, and that while they give an assent in some instances, they withhold it in others, we rest with the greater confidence in their conclusions. If it should be said that the primitive Christians, from indifference or simplicity, permitted forged writings to be palmed upon them as the productions of evangelists and apostles, we have it in our power boldly to contradict the assertion. They did not give credit to every pretence, but exercised a spirit of discrimination, in consequence of which, they not only rejected a variety of books circulated under the most venerable names, but regarded at first with some degree of suspicion certain others, which they afterwards admitted into the canon, when their title was more fully established. If their testimony should be pronounced insufficient in these circumstances, there is an end to all confidence in human veracity; and it will be impossible to prove the genuineness of any book in the world. The truth is, that none has come down to us from ancient times so fully attested as the Christian Scriptures.

Additional evidence is furnished by the heretics who arose in the early ages. Cerinthus lived at the same time with the apostle John; he taught that circumcision and the observance of the law of Moses were necessary to salvation; and rejected the inspiration and authority of Paul, because he had delivered a contrary doctrine. Hence it is plain that the epistles of Paul were then in existence, and are the same with those which we at present possess. The Cerinthians bore testimony to the existence of the gospel of Matthew, for they received it, because they did not consider it as at variance with their tenets. The Ebionites, who were contemporary with them, also prove the existence of Matthew's gospel, and of the epistles of Paul, by their having received the former in a corrupted form, and rejected the latter. Marcion, in the beginning of the second century, received the gospel of Luke, but altered it so as to make it a gospel of his own. He affirmed that the gospel of Matthew, the epistle to the Hebrews, and the epistles of Peter and James, were not fit for the use of Christians, but of Jews; but he received ten of the epistles of Paul. All these books, therefore, existed and were known in his time. Basilides, in the early part of the second century, acknowledged the gospel of Matthew, and there is no evidence that he rejected the other three. The Valentinians, about the same date, drew arguments in favour of their opinions, as Irenæus informs us, from the evangelical and apostolical writings, and it is probable, that they received all the books, as various other sects and leaders of heresy did, whom it is not necessary to particularize. "Noetus," says Dr. Lardner, "Paul of Samosata, Sabellius, Marcellus, Photinus, the Novatians, Donatists, Manichees, Priscillianists, beside Artemon, the Audians, the Arians, and divers others, all received most or all the same books of the New Testament which the Catholics re-

* Paley's Evidences, part i. chap. ix. § 1.

ceived; and agreed in a like respect for them as written by apostles, or their disciples and companions."*

There is still another source from which we are furnished with evidence in favour of the antiquity of the books, and of the fact that no doubt was entertained of their genuineness. I refer to Celsus, ever a virulent enemy of Christianity, in the latter part of the second century. His writings have perished, but a great part of his work is transcribed in Origen's elaborate answer, from which it appears, that he knew the names and contents of the books of the New Testament, and expressed no suspicion that they were forgeries. Porphyry, in the third century, was accounted one of the ablest and most learned opponents of our religion. His writings also are lost, but it appears that he allowed our Scriptures to be genuine, and did not even call in question the miraculous facts related in them. That, if he had found any pretext, he would have willingly convicted them of forgery, is evident from the attempt which he made to prove that the prophecies of Daniel were written after the events. Julian, in the fourth century, who is called the apostate, because, having been once a Christian, he embraced heathenism, and employed all his influence and authority to re-establish it, also bears testimony to the Scriptures of the New Testament, and particularly to the historical books. He speaks of Matthew, Luke, John, and the Acts of the Apostles; and instead of disputing the genuineness of the writings, admits many of the facts recorded in them, and even the miracles of Christ—an admission which nothing would have induced him to make, but the utter impossibility of invalidating the narrative of the evangelists. The last argument which I shall produce, is founded on the Syriac Version. Some learned men believe, and have endeavoured to prove, by a variety of arguments, that it was made in the first century; and as four Catholic epistles, the second of Peter, the second and third of John, and the epistle of Jude, are wanting, and also the Revelation, they suppose that, at the time, these books had not appeared. If this early date be assigned to it, it proves not only that the other books were then in existence, but that they were considered as the productions of the evangelists and apostles; for it could only be on this supposition, that they were translated for the use of the Syrian churches.

We have proved the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, by the evidence which is resorted to in all cases of this nature,—the testimony of those who had the best opportunities of ascertaining whether they were written by the persons whose names they bear, because they lived in the age when they were published, or soon after, and were led by their circumstances to make an accurate inquiry. This is a point which demands particular attention. When a book is in circulation in which we take no interest, we perhaps do not give ourselves the trouble to ask who is the author; or if a momentary curiosity prompts us to put the question, we are satisfied with the first name which is mentioned, because in a matter so trifling we care not whether we are right or wrong. The truth would be of no advantage to us, and a mistake would do us no harm. But the books of which we are speaking, claimed to be received as authoritative, professed to prescribe the terms of salvation, and called upon men to make a total change in their religious sentiments and practice; a change which was opposed not only by the power of prejudice and habit, but by a regard to personal safety; for it was quite evident that it would both subject them to the charge of singularity, and draw upon them the hatred and the violence of those who, retaining their old opinions, would look upon them as guilty of impiety and apostacy. We cannot suppose that men in their senses could have run this hazard upon slight grounds, upon vague reports. "It was a matter of importance only to a few, or rather of no real moment to any body, whether Thucydides wrote the history, and Plato the dialogues, which pass under their names; but the present peace and the eternal salvation of thousands and millions, the decision of innumerable controversies, and the regulation of the faith and practice of the church in all ages and nations, depended upon the certain knowledge that the writers of the New Testament were the immediate followers and ambassadors of Christ." If the books were received by persons thus circumstanced, we may believe that they knew them to be genuine productions.

This reasoning is confirmed by certain proofs of genuineness which are furnished by the books themselves. They contain internal marks, from which it appears that they were written in the age to which they referred, and by the persons to whom they are ascribed.

The first is the style.—The books profess to have been written by Jews, who lived in Judea, a short time before the destruction of Jerusalem. Luke indeed is supposed to have been a native of Antioch, but he is understood to have descended from Jewish parents; and Paul was a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, but he was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," and received his education under Gamaliel, a doctor of the Jews. The books are all written in Greek, for it is not worth while to except the gospel of Matthew, since so many learned men have called in question the opinion of the ancients that it was originally published in Hebrew. Greek was the fittest language for a revelation intended for mankind at large, because it was generally understood; but the native tongue of the writers was Hebrew, as it is called in the New Testament, although it was a mixed dialect, and has been more correctly denominated Syro-Chaldaic. Now, this language had not only its peculiar words, but also its peculiar idioms, which a person who had been accustomed to them from his infancy would retain, after he had laid aside the use of the words; for we find, in modern times, that when a man attempts to compose in a foreign language, although he may use none but words of that language, he often employs combinations of terms, and modes of expression, which are contrary to its laws, and are borrowed from his own. When Englishmen write French, or Frenchmen write English, they frequently fall into this error. It may be avoided, by accurate study and long practice; but they are very few who are able to express themselves in an acquired language with perfect purity; and this excellence was not to be expected in the apostles and evangelists, who were men without education. Luke and Paul, indeed, may be excepted; but their education, being Jewish, was not calculated to remedy this fault. Knowing, then, to what nation the writers belonged, what might we have presumed *a priori* would be the nature of their style? We might have presumed, that the words would be Greek, but that the idiom would be Hebrew; or that the composition would be that of persons who thought in one language and wrote in another: and this is exactly the character of the gospels and epistles. On this subject, indeed, learned men have differed in opinion. Blackwall, in his Sacred Classics, has undertaken to vindicate the New Testament from the charge of solecism and barbarism; and in executing this task, has displayed great learning and ingenuity. It must be acknowledged, that in not a few instances, he has succeeded in showing that certain modes of expression and construction, which had been objected to, are not inconsistent with purity, by producing similar examples from the most approved authors; but after all his labour, it is admitted by every scholar, that the Greek of the New Testament bears the marks of a Jewish origin. It is such Greek as would have been written by the persons

* Lardner, part ii. General Review.

to whom the books are ascribed ; that is, by Jews, who had not enjoyed the advantage of attending the schools of grammarians and rhetoricians.

This, then, is an internal proof of the genuineness of the books. Their composition accords with the character and circumstances of the reputed authors. Had the language been classical, there would have been some ground of suspicion ; and the style would have been produced as a proof that they were not the works of the apostles and evangelists. To this objection, if Christians had replied, that the superiority of the style might be accounted for by the inspiration of the writers, infidels would have told them, that this argument was of no weight, because it rested upon an assumption of which there was no proof. It was therefore wisely ordered, that the writers, although, as we believe, under divine superintendence, were permitted to set down their thoughts in a style which was natural to them, and thus to furnish internal evidence that the works which bear their names are really their own. It has been observed, that the books could not have been written as they are written, later than the first century, and no person assigns to them an earlier date. There were no Christians in Judea, in the second century, but the Ebionites and Nazarenes, who will not be suspected of having forged Greek gospels, because it is known that they used only one, which was in Hebrew. The composition of Christians in other countries would have approached nearer to the classical purity. The New Testament would have been free, at least, from Jewish idioms.

The second internal evidence of the genuineness of the books, is simplicity, by which I mean, the absence of all appearance of art. It must strike every reader of the gospels, I should think, that there is in them nothing like contrivance, nothing like the exercise of policy or ingenuity to accomplish a particular end. The manifest purpose of the gospels, is to give a narrative of the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, of the works which he performed, and the doctrines which he taught. Now there is evidence on the face of them that they were drawn up as the events took place, or as they occurred to the recollection of the writers, without any studied design to combine them into a well-digested history, or to produce a particular effect. It was their obvious intention to exalt the character of their Master, but they do not resort to the usual method of panegyric and elaborate description. They content themselves with a naked relation of facts ; and although many of them are of an extraordinary nature, they give no comment upon them, affix no note of admiration, employ no method to arrest the attention of their readers, and to excite corresponding emotions. In all this a candid mind will perceive the signature of truth, and recognise a manner totally different from that of an artful man, whose aim it was to palm a forgery upon the world. The evangelists are evidently men, who, believing what they relate to be true, leave the facts to speak for themselves, being convinced that they did not stand in need of any assistance from them to make a proper impression. The calmness of their manner seems to indicate, that they were familiarized to such events as they record ; for how could they have spoken of stupendous miracles in dispassionate terms, if they had not frequently witnessed them? These observations go to establish not only the genuineness but the truth of the narrative : but the latter is not at present the subject of inquiry ; and I intend merely to show, that they are such as we might have expected from the persons to whom they are ascribed. Their story is the story of eye and ear-witnesses. It bears no resemblance to a fabricated tale to which the contriver was anxious to gain credit. In the epistles, there is the same simplicity or artlessness. It is impossible not to consider them as letters which were actually sent to the persons addressed. There are so many allusions to facts, so many incidental notices, so many references to existing circumstances, as to leave no suspicion of forgery. They are such letters as we should conceive the apostles to have sent to different Christian societies soon after their formation, while the Jews still subsisted in a national capacity, and the controversy was carrying on between the law of Moses and the religion of Christ. That controversy lost much of its interest after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple : and had the epistles been composed in the second century, they would have rarely, if ever, referred to it.

The third internal evidence of the genuineness of the books, is their particularity. You will perceive that I chiefly refer to the historical books ; but in the epistles also, there is such a specification of names, places, and facts, as affords sufficient ground for concluding that they were written by the apostles. When a man sits down to compose a fictitious narrative, with an intention to pass it upon the world as a true one, he finds it necessary to confine himself to general statements. It would be dangerous to descend to particulars, because the more he abounded in them, it would be the more impossible to avoid detection. The circumstantiality of the gospels, the specification of times and places, of the persons concerned in events, and of the persons who witnessed them, furnishes an argument in favour of their truth, if they were published at the period to which they are assigned : but my sole purpose is to use it as a proof of their genuineness. When a person composes a fictitious narrative of transactions, and lays the scene in an age and country different from his own, it would require greater skill and circumspection than fall perhaps to the lot of any individual, effectually to conceal his design. He would be apt to err in his descriptions of the country, in his representations of manners and customs, in his statements of civil institutions, and of religious opinions and practices. He would be apt to fall into anachronisms, by introducing modes of thinking and acting which belonged to a different period. Blunders of this kind have often furnished the means of discovering forgeries. The Sibylline oracles, which were so much circulated in the early ages, and professed to have been uttered by certain prophetesses of the heathen world, who lived before the coming of Christ, are so clumsily fabricated that we cannot but feel surprise, that any person should have supposed them to be genuine. The predictions are clearer than those of the Old Testament ; and they could have been written only by a person who lived after the events. In the same way other forgeries have been detected, although by no means so gross. Minute circumstances are apt to escape an impostor, which unveil his design to a scrutinizing eye. It is extremely difficult to give falsehood the exact resemblance of truth, when it extends to a system having many ramifications. "The accuracy of the writers of the New Testament," it has been remarked by Dr. Cook in his Inquiry into the books of the New Testament, "has been proved by the strictest examination and comparison of their works with those of the best historians nearest to their own times, who mention any of the same facts, and by the admirable consistency which the narratives and allusions to fact made by the writers of the new Testament have with one another. It is an accuracy which embraces the topography, the vegetable productions, the agriculture, the climate of Palestine ; the habitations, dress, manners, character of its inhabitants, the civil and religious institutions, customs, opinions, philosophical sects, and political parties, whether of the Jews or Romans, and the various distinguished individuals, and offices, and actions occasionally introduced into the narrative. It is accuracy pervading not only what Lardner has called the principal facts of the New Testament, relating directly to the life, ministry, and death of Jesus Christ, but the occasional facts con-

nected with all those various collateral, and some of them transient subjects just enumerated. It is accuracy equally conspicuous in the more formal direct narratives of events, and in the incidental allusions to them; so that there is no clashing of the one with the other, no false movement indicating the manufacture of fraud. Now, this harmony and consistency, it is well known, from the extreme difficulty of giving even to a short narrative connected with known events, the semblance when it has not the foundation of truth, cannot be accomplished where that foundation is wanting; and where they exist, decidedly proclaim the most intimate acquaintance with the facts thus faithfully described."* Hence we infer, that the books of the New Testament were written by persons who were present at the scenes and witnessed the events which they describe; and minute circumstances have been pointed out in the course of the narratives which an impostor would not have noticed, and which would have occurred to no person who was not upon the spot.

The fourth internal evidence is furnished by the discrepancies between the gospels. If they were not written by the apostles and immediate followers of Christ, they were fabricated at a later period by some persons who acted in concert, with a view to impose the account contained in them upon the world, as true. Now, let us think for a moment in what manner persons having this design would proceed. If they agreed, in order to give their respective accounts a greater appearance of truth, not always to relate the same events, and to use the same words, they would agree to avoid any thing like contradiction, because, being conscious of their own design to deceive, they would be in continual apprehension lest others should suspect it, and would guard against any circumstance calculated to excite or to strengthen this suspicion. Whatever other mistakes in their narratives might have betrayed them, we should have expected, that, in relating the same facts they would have studied to render their statements perfectly harmonious. This is the plan which false witnesses always adopt. We find, however, if we judge by this rule, that the writers of the New Testament did not act in concert, and that they came forward in the character of independent witnesses to the facts which they relate. There are differences in their accounts, which have been considered by some as amounting to express contradictions. How these may be reconciled, is not our present business to inquire. The fact is certain; and it serves to prove the genuineness of their writings, because it shows, that each of them set down events as they appeared to him at the time, or afterwards occurred to his recollection, without having consulted with any others regarding the best form of the narrative. We discover nothing which has the character of forgery. If they agree or disagree, it is without design; there is an artlessness, and to speak of them merely as human authors, an unguardedness, which is the most distant imaginable from a fraudulent contrivance.

The last proof which I shall produce is founded on the undesigned coincidence or correspondence between certain parts of the new Testament. The argument from this source has been applied to the Acts, and the epistles of Paul, with great industry and ability by Dr. Paley, in his work entitled Horæ Paulinæ. He observes, that "agreement or conformity between letters, bearing the name of an ancient author, and a received history of that author's life, does not necessarily establish the credit of either." The history may "have been wholly, or in part, compiled from the letters; in which case, it is manifest that the history adds nothing to the evidence already afforded by the letters." "The letters may have been fabricated out of the history; a species of imposture which is certainly practicable: and which, without any accession of proof or authority, would necessarily produce the appearance of consistency and agreement." Once more, "the history and letters may have been founded upon some authority common to both; as upon reports and traditions which prevailed in the age in which they were composed, or upon some ancient record now lost, which both writers consulted; in which case also, the letters, without being genuine, may exhibit marks of conformity with the history; and the history without being true, may agree with the letters." He goes on to state, that in "examining the agreement between ancient writings, the character of truth and originality is undesignedness," by which we understand, that the allusions in one writing to another must appear to have been made without any intention to corroborate or verify what the other had said, and to have been suggested solely by the author's familiar acquaintance with the facts. They occurred to him without an effort, as things which he witnessed or experienced. "With respect to those writings of the New Testament, which are to be the subject of our present consideration," Dr. Paley adds, "I think, that, as to the authenticity of the epistles, this argument, where it is sufficiently sustained by instances, is nearly conclusive; for, I cannot assign a supposition of forgery, in which coincidences of the kind we inquire after are likely to appear. As to the history, it extends to these points; it proves the general reality of the circumstances; it proves the historian's knowledge of these circumstances. In the present instance, it confirms his pretensions of having been a contemporary; and in the latter part of his history, a companion of St. Paul." "In a great plurality of examples, I trust the reader will be perfectly convinced, that no design or contrivance whatever, has been exercised; and if some of the coincidences alleged appear to be minute, circuitous or oblique, let him reflect, that this very indirectness and subtilty is that which gives force and propriety to the example." He mentions some references in which the argument will not hold, because it might be said that they were intended for the purpose of giving the appearance of agreement between the epistles and the history; but he produces the following as a case in point: "When I read in the Acts of the Apostles, that, 'when Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, behold a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, *which was a Jewess*;' and when, in an epistle addressed to Timothy, I find him reminded of 'his having known the Holy Scriptures from a child,' which implies, that he must, on one side or both, have been brought up by Jewish parents, I conceive, that I remark a coincidence which shows, by its very obliquity, that scheme was not employed in its formation."* I have stated this argument almost entirely in his own words; but it is impossible to do justice to it within such narrow limits, and I therefore refer you to the work itself.

* Cook's Inquiry, p. 137.

* Paley's Horæ Paulinæ, chap. i.

LECTURE VII.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

Authenticity of the Scriptures inferred from Genuineness—Their Reception as genuine is Evidence of the Miracles therein recorded—Argument from Miracles—Definition of a Miracle—Miracles are possible; The work of God alone; Capable of being proved—Examination of Hume's Argument—Miracles are natural and necessary Accompaniments of a new Revelation—Heathen and popish Miracles—Criterion of Miracles.

We have produced, in the preceding lecture, a variety of external and internal proofs of the genuineness of

the Christian Scriptures. If any man should still deny that they were written by the persons to whom they are ascribed, we have a right to ask, By whom then were they composed? We do not, however, expect an answer to the question; for, as they were never attributed to any other authors by those who had the best opportunities of knowing their history, it would be ridiculous, at this late period to attempt to trace them to a different origin. It is certain that the books were known and read, and received as genuine, in the second century; it is certain that they were known and read, and received as genuine, in the first. It remains, therefore, to ascertain what credit is due to them, and to the books of the Old Testament, the genuineness of which has been also established.

I formerly stated the difference between the genuineness and the authenticity of a writing. It is genuine, if it be the work of the person under whose name it was published; it is authentic, if its contents are true. These properties are by no means inseparable. A book may be genuine, but unworthy of credit, because it is full of fables and fictions; and it may be true, although bearing a false name. In the present case, however, they are inseparable; that is, the genuineness of the sacred writings infers their authenticity; and that this is a legitimate conclusion, will appear from the following observations.

Let it be remembered, that the books were narratives of events, which are said to have taken place in the age and before the eyes of the persons who were called to receive them as authentic. There was no opportunity to take advantage of the credulity with which men are often and justly chargeable, and to support a plausible account by feigned authorities which would overawe their judgments. But every person was competent to decide at once, without a tedious process of reasoning, whether what was related was true or false. Let it be observed, too, that the events were not of a common kind, and of an uninteresting nature, the accuracy of which it was the concern of no individual to settle, so that the account, although blended with fiction, might be permitted to pass without contradiction. Many of them were miraculous and were designed to attest a religion on which the future hopes of mankind should be founded, and by which their present conduct should be regulated. They were connected with what is usually considered as the most important subject which can engage our attention. It is contrary to all the principles of reason to suppose, that in such a case, men would yield a listless assent; and still more, that they would be satisfied with evidence which they knew to be false.

The religion which Moses called the Israelites to embrace was not absolutely new, because their fathers had worshipped the same Being who was now announced as the God of the nation. But there is reason to believe that they had in a great measure forgotten him during their residence in Egypt, and were tainted with the idolatry of the people among whom they had lived for more than two hundred years. Many of them, therefore, can be considered as no better than heathens,—probably the majority, if we may judge of their former state by their subsequent conduct; and, consequently, the change which they were required to make, was almost as great as if Moses had undertaken the conversion of the Egyptians themselves. The greatness of the change is manifest from a review of the religion. They were commanded to renounce the gods of Egypt, and of all other nations, to whose service they appear from their history to have been strongly addicted, and to worship Jehovah alone. Upon this fundamental tenet was founded a system of observances, which, instead of being modelled after the idolatrous forms to which they had been accustomed, as some have supposed without the slightest evidence, was contrived in express opposition to the usages of Egypt and other countries, for the purpose of effecting a complete separation. The rites enjoined were multiplied to a great number, were to be practised not only in the sanctuary, but in the whole detail of life, required constant attention and circumspection, and must have been felt to be extremely inconvenient. Besides, they subjected the Israelites to no inconsiderable expense, by the frequent sacrifices which they found it necessary to offer, and by the tithes which they were commanded to pay to the priests. There were also certain injunctions to which there is nothing similar in the laws of other nations, and which are of so peculiar a character, that it is altogether unaccountable, upon the principles of political wisdom, that any legislator should have proposed them, or any people should have submitted to them. I refer to the law of the Sabbatical year, when the ground was not to be tilled and sown; to the law ordaining that thrice a year all the males should repair to the place where the sanctuary stood; to the law forbidding the multiplication of horses; and to the law of the jubilee, which required mortgaged possessions to return to the original proprietors, and slaves to be restored to liberty. It is evident that these laws interfered with public and private interest. They exposed the country to the danger of famine, invasion, and conquest, and demanded from individuals a sacrifice of property which might have given rise to open resistance.

It is altogether incredible that any legislator of a sound mind would have made such enactments by his own authority, or that any nation would have acquiesced in them, merely because he chose to impose them. Such, indeed, is the texture of the whole law, that we cannot conceive Moses to have contrived it, or the Israelites, if left at liberty to choose, to have received it. It may be said, that he persuaded them that Jehovah was its author. But how did he persuade them? How did he accomplish his purpose? Was it by boldly affirming that his law was a revelation from heaven? The Israelites must have been simple indeed if they believed him,—simple to a degree of which there is no other example. Did they quietly submit to have the yoke of ceremonies wreathed about their necks? to live in a state of separation from the world? to be the objects of the ridicule and hatred of mankind, merely because Moses told them that such was the will of God? Truly, he who can believe this is as simple as they are supposed to have been. But their history forbids the supposition, and shows that they were an obstinate refractory race,—very unfit materials to be moulded into any form at the pleasure of an impostor. Besides, we know that it was not by simple affirmation that Moses gained his end, but that he appealed to evidence, and the evidence was miraculous. While he asserted that the law was from God, he told them that they had themselves heard a part of it published with his own voice, and that the other parts had been delivered by him as his accredited messenger,—accredited by signs and wonders which they had seen with their own eyes. Would this new pretence, if it was a pretence, have added any weight to the first? No; it would have had the contrary effect; it would have furnished the means of disproving it, and have put it in the power of every Israelite to say, "It is perfectly plain to me that your claim to be the minister of Jehovah is false, for I never heard his voice, nor saw one of those supernatural works by which you say he attested your commission." The reception of the law is therefore a proof that the people were satisfied of the authority of Moses to impose it, or rather, that they were satisfied that the law emanated from the God of their fathers; and consequently, is a proof that they had witnessed the miracles in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness.

Thus, the genuineness proves the authenticity of the

books, or the truth of the religion contained in them. They were published at the time to which they are assigned, and consequently would not have been received if the events recorded in them had not actually happened.

The same reasoning may be employed to prove the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, and particularly the historical books. The religion which they announced was not new, but was the development and completion of the revelation made by the ministry of Moses and the prophets; but it differed from that revelation in some important respects, and still more from the views of it which were generally entertained; for, although the Jews professed the religion of their fathers, they had greatly corrupted it. The Messiah whom the books introduce to our notice, is not the person who was expected in that character. He was a man of obscure birth, and in a humble rank of life; his doctrine was spiritual; his actions were of a peaceful nature; he avoided worldly honours; instead of encouraging his countrymen to rebel against the Romans, and assert their national independence, he taught them to submit to the established government; and after a short course of contradiction and suffering, he died upon a cross. There was not one trait in his character which corresponded with the prevailing hope of a mighty conqueror, and a splendid temporal monarch. But this is not all. They were required to adopt not only new opinions, but new practices; to renounce the religious institutions which had been established in the nation for fifteen hundred years, and to which they were strongly attached, not only as sacred, but as the means of recommending them to the favour of God. They were to forsake the temple and the altar, with their pompous services, and be content with a simple ritual, which prescribed nothing to please the senses. At the same time, they were to forego the flattering distinction which they had long enjoyed of being the peculiar people, to see the Gentiles invested with the same privileges, and to regard them as in every respect their equals, as subjects of the Messiah, and members of his church. We cannot suppose that they would have admitted upon slight grounds a religion which demanded such important changes and such costly sacrifices.

To the Gentiles, the religion of the gospel was new, in every sense of the word. It was a new God whom it announced; for although he had been worshipped for ages by the Jews, he was unknown, except by vague report, to the nations of the world. Yet he claimed the exclusive possession of Divinity, and required to be worshipped without a rival. Of the person by whom this religion was founded, they had never heard before; and the character in which he was exhibited was strange, and in the first instance unintelligible; for, ignorant as they were of the Divine law, and of the degree and extent of human guilt and depravity, they had no expectation and felt no need of a spiritual Saviour. The doctrines connected with his person and work, and the general scheme of Christianity, would appear to them to be extravagant, unphilosophical, and false. Not less objectionable in their eyes, would be the system of duties which it enjoined. Of some of them they had no idea, and of others they entertained a contemptuous opinion; while the opposite views were so common, that all sense of their moral turpitude was lost, and their wisest men had recommended them both by precept and by example. There is a consideration which is equally applicable to Gentiles and to Jews—that the new religion being so adverse to those already established, the persons who first embraced it would not only be reproached for their singularity, fickleness, and credulity, but would incur the hatred of zealots and bigots, awaken the suspicion and jealousy of the higher powers, and subject themselves to such restraint and punishment as might be deemed necessary to check this dangerous innovation.

In this state of things, the religion of Christ was presented to mankind in the discourses of the apostles, and in the written records which have been transmitted to us. By what means did it obtain credit? This was not a case in which bold affirmation and eloquent appeals would succeed. There was no predisposition in favour of the religion, there was a strong prejudice against it. What was wanted was evidence, clear, convincing, and overwhelming. Now the books tell us, that such evidence was furnished, both by the author and by the preachers of the religion, in the miracles which they performed in Judea, and in other countries. We have here a satisfactory solution of the problem, how the books, and the religion taught in them, came to be received; but it is impossible to explain the fact, upon any other hypothesis. If those who lived in that age saw miracles, they could not doubt the truth of the system, in support of which they were wrought; but if they did not see them, how were they persuaded? The effect is certain, and we can discover no other adequate cause. It would be the greatest miracle of all, says Chrysostom, if the world believed without miracles. When all the circumstances of the case are taken into consideration, it would be a fact in the history of mankind without a parallel, and absolutely inexplicable. Admit the miracles, and all is intelligible; deny the miracles, and all is mystery. Deny the miracles, and you must say, that there were two epochs, namely, the age of Moses and the age of Christ, when the human mind underwent a sudden revolution, and acted in opposition to the laws by which, at all other times, it is governed. Men believed without evidence; without evidence, they adopted opinions contrary to their deep-rooted prejudices; engaged in practices repugnant to their strongest inclinations; sacrificed the good opinion of those whose favour they once highly prized; and exposed property, liberty, and life to hazard, for a dream. But as human nature is the same in all ages, those who lived at the periods referred to must have had good reason for their conduct. Now the only reason which could justify their conduct, was such evidence as left no room for doubt: and in this case, the evidence must have been miraculous, for in no other way could a revelation from heaven be proved.

The argument founded on the testimony of the primitive times is weakened in the minds of some, by a misapprehension respecting the persons by whom it is borne. They were Christians who received the books of the New Testament, and have attested the facts upon which our religion is founded. They are, therefore, looked upon with a degree of suspicion, as if they were interested persons. It seems to be supposed, and infidels take it for granted, that there was a set of men who, having become Christians no man knows why, laid their heads together to practise an imposition upon the world. This puts one in mind of the Indian hypothesis that the earth rests upon an elephant, and the elephant stands upon a tortoise; but upon what the tortoise is supported, we are left to conjecture. The witnesses, it is said, are Christians, and therefore are not to be depended upon. But what made them Christians? This question is overlooked by the objectors; but a right answer to it would show that their testimony is worthy of credit. I cannot do better than to transcribe the words of Mr. Addison, in his short treatise on the evidence of the Christian religion:—"Let us now suppose, that a learned heathen writer who lived within sixty years of our Saviour's crucifixion, after having shown that false miracles were generally wrought in obscurity, and before few or no witnesses, speaking of those which were wrought by our Saviour, has the following passage:—'But his works were always seen, because they were true; they were seen by those who were healed, and by those who were raised

from the dead. Nay, these persons, who were thus healed and raised, were seen not only at the time of their being healed and raised, but long after. Nay, they were seen not only all the while our Saviour was upon earth, but survived after his departure out of this world; nay, some of them were living in our days.' I dare say you would look upon this as a glorious attestation for the cause of Christianity, had it come from the hand of a famous Athenian philosopher. These forementioned words, however, are actually the words of one who lived about sixty years after our Saviour's crucifixion, and was a famous philosopher in Athens; but it will be said, he was a convert to Christianity. Now, consider this matter impartially, and see if his testimony is not much more valid for that reason: Had he continued a Pagan philosopher, would not the world have said that he was not sincere in what he writ, or did not believe it; for if so, would they not have told us, he would have embraced Christianity? This was indeed the case of this excellent man: he had so thoroughly examined the truth of our Saviour's history, and the excellency of that religion which he taught, and was so entirely convinced of both, that he became a proselyte, and died a martyr." "I do allow that, generally speaking, a man is not so acceptable and unquestioned an evidence, on facts which make for the advancement of his own party. But we must consider that, in the case before us, the persons to whom we appeal were of an opposite party till they were persuaded of the truth of those very facts which they report. They bear evidence to a history in defence of Christianity, the truth of which history was their motive to embrace Christianity. They attest facts which they had heard while they were yet heathens, and had they not found reason to believe them, they would still have continued heathens, and have made no mention of them in their writings."*

It appears, that from the genuineness of the books, we may infer their authenticity. They would not have been received, if they had not been true; or what amounts to the same thing, the religion which is taught in them would not have been embraced, if the men of that age had not witnessed, or were otherwise assured of the facts upon which it was founded. The truth of the facts is the only conceivable motive by which they would be induced to become converts to it. It is affirmed in the New Testament, that miracles were wrought, not only by Jesus Christ, but by his apostles. This affirmation is not only made in general terms, but is confirmed by particular instances; and the time when, the place where, and the persons upon whom the miracles were wrought, are frequently specified. What is more, the very persons to whom some of the books are addressed, are appealed to as witnesses of the miracles. In the second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul says to them: "Truly, the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds;"† and in the epistle to the Hebrews, he mentions it as an unquestionable fact, that when the gospel was preached to them, God bore the preachers witness, "both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."‡ The argument, then, is reduced to a narrow compass. These assertions were either true or false. If they were false, how could the apostle venture to make them? Had he lost his senses? was he a raving visionary, who mistook the illusions of fancy for realities? or was he in jest, and did he wish his letters to be laughed at? These suppositions are out of the question. He was in a sound mind, and expected what he wrote to be received with respect. And how were his epistles received? were they treated with the scorn, or the indignation which is due to the man who presumes to tell lies to our face? We know that they were regarded then, as they have ever since been, as the compositions of an apostle, who was authorized and qualified to instruct the church in the important truths and duties of religion. But they could not have been so regarded, if the Corinthians and the Hebrews had not seen miracles performed by Paul and by others, in confirmation of their doctrine. The claim to supernatural powers would have destroyed all their credit, if it had not been substantiated. "In matters of opinion, it is possible to impose upon others by bold asseverations, and subtle reasonings; but he who promises to cure the blind, and raise the dead, leaves himself no subterfuge, and must either perform his promise, or submit to be considered as a fool or a madman." There is another view which may be taken of the argument. While the apostles affirm that they had wrought miracles in the presence of those to whom they wrote, they farther affirm that some of those persons had received miraculous gifts. There are intimations of this kind in several of the epistles; but the subject is discussed at length in the first epistle to the Corinthians. This is the last thing which an impostor would do, or rather it is a thing which he would not do. He might appeal to the reason of others, because he had contrived previously to pervert it by sophistry; he might appeal to their senses, because he could deceive them by the arts of legerdemain; but he would not dare to appeal to their consciousness. Paul would have been laughed at, if supernatural gifts had been unknown in the primitive church. But he was still regarded as an apostle of Christ; and the continued respect which was shown to him, is a proof that such gifts did exist in the church. By the communication of them, the revelation contained in the books of the New Testament was authenticated.

A miracle is a supernatural work. It is an effect which could not be produced according to the laws of nature, and, therefore, implies a suspension of these laws, or a deviation from them. Some have called it a transgression or violation of them: but I do not think that these terms are well chosen, because in their usual application they suggest the idea of disobedience to authority, and an encroachment upon right; and consequently, are improper in speaking of any act done by the Creator himself, or by others according to his will. Let it be observed, that we do not give the name of miracle to every prodigy or strange event, because it is not necessary in such cases to suppose that the laws of nature are counteracted or surpassed. They may be accounted for, and many of them have been explained by an accidental concurrence of causes which rarely meet, and their number is diminished in proportion as the boundaries of science are enlarged; that is, the more thoroughly nature is understood, the more easily can such things be shown to be in harmony with its laws. Not a few of the miracles related by ancient historians are now known not to be such, but merely uncommon events. We do not call a monstrous birth, or a fall of stones from the clouds, miraculous; but we would so designate the cure of blindness by a touch, and the raising of the dead by a word.

The possibility of miracles will be called in question only by atheists. He who believes that the universe exists by eternal necessity, may consistently deny that any change can take place in its established order; but no such idea can be entertained by a person who admits that it is the work of an intelligent and an omnipotent Being. To an enlightened theist, its laws must appear to be nothing else but the uniform exertion of his power; and surely he can alter the mode of operation when there is some end worthy of his wisdom to be accomplished. Vegetation implies a particular process, in which a seed, the earth, moisture, air, light, and heat,

* The Evidences of the Christian Religion, sect. iii.
† 2 Cor. xii. 12. ‡ Heb. ii. 4.

perform their respective parts, and a certain time is required to its completion; but there is no doubt that he, who gives efficacy to this process, could produce a perfect plant in a moment, as it must be allowed that he did at the beginning. Now, if a tree should instantly spring up before us, in full size, covered with foliage and laden with fruit, we should not hesitate to acknowledge a miracle. It is not necessary to dwell upon this point, because it will not be disputed that miracles are possible, whatever doubts may be entertained with respect to their necessity and expedience.

I proceed to observe that none but God can perform miracles. The truth of this observation, I should think, would be conceded, if the true idea of a miracle were kept steadily in view; for, if it be understood to be an effect which cannot be produced by the laws of nature, we are compelled to have recourse to the immediate power of God for the cause. It is acknowledged that there are some passages of Scripture, from which it has been inferred that miracles may be performed by evil spirits and their agents. After some of the miracles which Moses wrought, it is said that "the magicians of Egypt did in like manner with their enchantments."* But many learned men contend and have endeavoured to prove, that nothing more is meant than that they imitated what Moses had done, by sleight of hand, and the assistance of those who were in concert with them. They think that this is evident from the nature of the miracles in which they pretended to rival the power of Moses, and which afforded them an opportunity to practise their dexterity; but when he proceeded to work other miracles, their skill was baffled, and they confessed that this was the finger of God. The story has much the appearance of art carried to a certain length and then failing, because its resources were exhausted. Our Lord foretold that there should arise false Christs and false prophets, who would show great signs and wonders; but we know that these were not real miracles, from the accounts which have come down to us of the wonders which they did exhibit, and which are exactly of the same kind with the tricks employed by jugglers to excite the admiration of the multitude. It is admitted that evil spirits might do some things which would appear miraculous to us. They might, for example, raise a man from the ground and convey him through the air to a distant place, as Satan did to our Saviour. But whatever astonishment such an event might excite, it would not, when understood, be regarded as a miracle. If we saw the spirit in a visible form lifting up the man, and carrying him in his hand, we should be surprised indeed, but still we should know that what was done was as agreeable to the laws of nature as if he had been elevated in a balloon. It would be a real miracle, if he was raised without the agency of any natural power, because the event would be referrible, in this case, to God himself, suspending or counteracting the law of gravitation. But, in speaking of miracles, we presuppose the existence and moral government of the Deity. On this ground, we believe that the different species of creatures will be restrained by his providence from going beyond their proper sphere; that wicked spirits will not be permitted to act such a part, as would lay mankind under an absolute impossibility of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, and subject them to unavoidable delusion. This would be the effect if they were permitted to work real miracles, or to do such things as could not be distinguished from real miracles; for then they could practise any imposition upon mankind, and there would be no means of discriminating a true from a pretended revelation. But they cannot act independently of Him, in whom all creatures live, and move, and have their being: and surely, he would not give them liberty to do any thing which would defeat the purpose of those communications to mankind, which it might seem fit to his wisdom to make. It is true, that men have been employed in working miracles, but they were merely instruments in the hands of God; and the only person who ever wrought them by his own power was Jesus Christ, who, as the Lord of nature, controlled its laws at his pleasure. We are apt to fall into a mistake, when we speak of miraculous powers having been communicated to certain individuals. We are mistaken if we suppose that such powers were inherent in them, were properly their own, and were exerted by then as they exerted their natural faculties. I believe that the apostle Paul could no more work miracles than I can, and the only difference between us is, that in consequence of a commission which he had received, and I have not, divine power accompanied the signs which he gave, or the words which he pronounced, when any thing was to be done out of the ordinary course. It was not Paul who performed the miracle, but God, or Jesus Christ, who secretly directed him to rebuke diseases, for example, when it was his design to remove them. "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The name of Jesus, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know."* We say, then, that God alone can work miracles.

Miracles may be proved; that is, there is no reason why we should conclude against them *a priori*, if they are not contrary to the perfections of God, or to any previous declaration of his will. In either of these cases we might at once pronounce them to be impossible, because we should be certain that he who only could, would not perform them. I acknowledge that the expectation that the course of nature will continue has been considered by philosophers to rest on an instinctive principle of belief; and that, upon this principle, it has been said, all the operations which have a respect to futurity are conducted. No man would build a house, if he did not expect that it would stand by the law of gravitation; or sow his field, if he did not calculate upon the regular order of the seasons. But observe how far this principle goes. It assumes the constancy of the laws of nature, (the knowledge of which, however, is derived from experience,) and from their past, deduces their future continuance. But what demonstrates the connexion between the premises and the conclusion? It is not *intuitively* evident, that because an event has regularly taken place for a long period, it will take place for a period equally long. If the course of nature is the order in which divine power is exerted to uphold the system of creation, we can have no certainty that it will be always exerted in the same order, without an express declaration from the Creator himself. By those who believe revelation, the conclusion that it will be perpetual must be pronounced to be false, and a time will come, when the expectation, founded on this instinctive principle of belief, will fail, because it foretells a mighty revolution, which will be followed by a new order of things. It is certain, that God has not obliged himself by any thing which he has said or done, by any thing which we can collect from reason or experience, to a uniformity in the exercise of his power, without a single deviation. To suppose that he has would be a mere assumption; and if any person should on this ground affirm that miracles are improbable, he would not deserve a serious answer. If the universe is governed by Omnipotence, for aught that we could tell, its movements might stop to-morrow, or some alteration might be made which would give it a new constitution; and the utmost which we are warranted to presume, is, that if it is the will of the Most High that the present race should still people the earth,

* Exod. vii. 11.

* Acts iii. 12, 16.

the present order, which is so admirably adapted to their nature and necessities, will be upheld. It should be observed, at the same time, that miracles no more disturb that order than the sudden movement of the index the fiftieth part of an inch backward or forward would disturb the order of a watch. The effect upon the system is, if possible, still less; for a miracle is a suspension or counteraction of the laws of nature only in one point of infinite space. The cure of a disease, or the resurrection of a dead body, does not affect the general laws of the universe.

These remarks have prepared our way for estimating the force of the celebrated argument against miracles which Hume has founded on experience.* He maintains that the proof against them is complete, being established upon the constant experience of the immutability of the order of nature. After the view which we have taken of the subject, this will appear to be no proof at all. Assuming that for four thousand years the course of nature had not been disturbed, we have yet no certain data upon which we could conclude that it would never be disturbed. If it is subject to the control of an intelligent Being of infinite power, it is presumptuous in any man to say that no case could arise which would render it proper for him to interpose in a sensible manner. The argument from the stability of nature is a mere sophism, an inference which is not contained in the premises. But we must say something more of it. The premises are neither self-evident nor demonstrable, but assumed. The advocates of miracles affirm that the course of nature has not been immutable; and this philosopher deems it sufficient to say that it has. How did he know what has been the course of nature in past ages? He did not exist from the beginning of time; he was but of yesterday, and was indebted for his knowledge of what had happened before him, to testimony. Now this testimony told him, as it tells us, that the course of nature had not been uniform, but had been subjected to repeated interruptions; and how could he say with candour and truth that it had never been altered? It was the business of a philosopher, not to take the uniformity of nature for granted in opposition to the only evidence which he could have on the subject, but to prove, if he was able, in some other way, that its course had never undergone the interruptions which history alleged. Had this plan been adopted, we should have never heard of his boasted argument, "which, with the wise and learned, would be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and consequently, would be useful as long as the world endures,"† namely, that as our experience of the uniformity of nature is firm and unalterable, but our experience of the truth of human testimony is variable, the evidence against miracles from the former, overwhelms and annihilates any evidence in their favour which is supposed to be afforded by the latter. He first falsifies testimony by representing it as establishing the immutability of the laws of nature, which it does not, and then opposes testimony, under the name of experience, to testimony affirming the change of those laws. We know that variable as is our experience of testimony, that is, although we find it sometimes to be true, and at other times to be false, the declaration of a single witness will often induce us to believe an event totally different from any which had fallen under our own observation. Credit is given every day to a traveller of acknowledged capacity and integrity, when he relates strange phenomena, and equally strange occurrences in the countries which he has visited. Were he indeed to affirm that he had seen a miracle, we should not be so ready to believe him; but if his report were corroborated by other witnesses alike possessed of mental and moral qualifications; if they agreed, not only when brought together, but when separately examined; if they had no interest to serve by their statement, but the maintaining of it would tend to their prejudice; if they should persist in averring its truth in the midst of sufferings and in the article of death; if they would not retract, although, upon condition of doing so, they were promised their lives; there is not a man in the world who would not admit that the evidence was irresistible. This is undoubtedly a case in which, to use the language of Hume, the falsehood of their testimony would be more miraculous than the event which they relate; and then, as he admits, they might pretend to command our belief or opinion. But these are the circumstances in which the testimony to the miracles of Christianity was delivered; and consequently, we must set aside, as irrelevant, all reasoning from the uniformity of the course of nature.

My next observation is, that a case may be conceived in which there would be a reason for the working of miracles, and it is the case in which they are alleged to have been actually wrought. If God should be pleased to make any communication to mankind for their benefit, and his own glory, there would be a necessity that he should interpose in a sensible manner. I do not say that we could have expected miracles beforehand, because we could not have known beforehand that he would make any communication of his will. But we see that amidst many things in the course of events which must be viewed as indications of severity, there are also tokens of his goodness. Notwithstanding the criminal conduct of his creatures, he makes the sun shine, and the rain fall upon them, gives them food and raiment, and innumerable blessings, and exercises mercy in relieving them from the evils which fall to their lot, and in providing the means, by the use of which their sufferings are alleviated. We could not, from these things, infer that he would proceed farther in our behalf; but if he should extend his care to our souls as well as to our bodies, it would be an extension of the benevolence already displayed in his works. It would be in conformity to the plan which he has hitherto pursued, and a farther development of it, if he should interpose to rescue fallen men from ignorance, guilt, and perdition. It would not be unworthy of him, or rather it would reflect great glory upon his character, if he should impart to them more correct views of his nature and attributes, deliver to them a plain rule of duty, point out the means of regaining his favour, and make such discoveries of the future state as would animate their obedience, console them in affliction, and raise them above the fear of death. It is certain that they have no claim to such a revelation; but the granting of it would be in accordance with the kind and compassionate nature of the providential dispensation under which they are placed. It does not follow that a revelation was strictly probable; but the reasoning shows that it was not improbable; that there was no presumption against it; nay, that there was some presumption in its favour; that is, that although nothing exactly similar had taken place, there was something so like it as to render it by no means incredible. Now, if God should be pleased to make a revelation for the instruction and happiness of his creatures, miracles were evidently necessary, because it was only by them that it could be attested. It was not to be a revelation to every individual, conveyed into his own mind with such marks of its origin as should take away all doubt; but a revelation communicated to a few, to be by them published to the world. Here, then, is a case in which miracles were called for to confirm the testimony of the ministers of heaven, to convince others that they spoke by higher authority than their own, and, consequently, the probability of miracles is in proportion to the probability that a revelation would be made. They are in-

* Hume's Essays, vol. ii. Of Miracles. † Vol. ii. p. 124.

separably connected; the one could not be without the other.

We have already seen that if miracles had not been wrought, our sacred books could not have been received as authentic, and that the religion taught in them could not have made its way in the world. No hypothesis but that of miracles will account for its success. It has been alleged, with a view to throw suspicion upon the scriptural narrations, that stories of miracles have been circulated and believed in all ages; and that, as credulity and the love of the marvellous are so prevalent among mankind, these principles will account for the belief of the Christian miracles. Our antagonists refer us to heathen and popish writings, in which are many similar relations equally entitled, as they insinuate, to attention.

It is true that ancient historians abound in wonderful facts; but there is no evidence that Livy, for example, gave credit to those which he records, and certainly he has stated no grounds on which we should believe them. He does not pretend to have seen any of them himself: they happened long before his time, and they were obviously vague rumours, the consequences of which affected no individual. Some of the miracles were natural events, as the fall of lightning upon a house or a tree, and the descent of stones, or as they are called in modern science *aerolites*, from the clouds; others were monstrous productions which now and then appear; and others were of the same ridiculous nature with the marvellous stories which are still current among the vulgar. The best authenticated heathen miracles are those which Vespasian performed in Alexandria upon a blind and a lame man.* It is questionable whether Tacitus, who relates them with a grave face, himself believed them. At first, Vespasian laughed at the proposal to attempt the feat, and did not proceed till he was excited by his friends, and assured by physicians that the lameness and blindness were curable by proper applications; that is to say, the whole business was a farce; but being acted by a mighty emperor, surrounded by his courtiers and soldiers, and tending to the honour of the tutelar god of the city, it passed without examination. How different were the Christian miracles, performed by a few obscure individuals, in the midst of enemies, and opposed by all the powers of the state!

Popish miracles are without number. Some of them carry their own confutation in their face, being so absurd and ridiculous that even a child would laugh at them. Some, again, are profane and impious in a shocking degree. Not a few of them have been clearly proved to be impostures by the confession of the persons employed in them, and by the discovery of the means by which they were effected; and these destroy the credit of the rest, upon this principle, that if you have once proved a man to be repeatedly guilty of falsehood, you are not bound ever to believe him.

Dr. Douglas, in his Criterion of Miracles, and Dr. Paley after him, have laid down various rules for distinguishing false accounts of miracles from true. No credit is due to relations long posterior to the time; to accounts of miracles which are said to have been performed in a far distant scene; or to transient rumours of wonderful events which soon cease to be mentioned. The miracles of Christianity were wrought on the spot where, and in the age when, the narrative was published: they have ever since been believed and appealed to as proofs of our religion. No credit is due to reports of miracles in which, to use the words of Paley, "no interest is involved, nothing is to be done or changed in consequence of believing them. Such stories are credited, if the careless assent that is given to them deserve that name, more by the indolence of the hearer, than by his judgment; or, though not much credited, are passed from one to another without inquiry or resistance."* But the miracles of Christianity must have awakened all the attention of mankind, because they decided, "if true, the most important question upon which the human mind can fix its anxiety." Once more, miracles may be suspected when they are reported to be wrought in confirmation of a religion supported by the state, and embraced by the people. All the heathen and popish miracles fall under suspicion on this ground. The miracles of Christianity were wrought against the established religions. The design of them was not to give credit to a sect already existing, but to found one upon the ruins of all other sects. There was no prejudice in their favour; the prejudices of mankind were all hostile to them. It was only by being true that they could accomplish their end; and since they did succeed, we may implicitly confide in the record of them which has been transmitted to us.

*Tacit. Hist. lib. iv.

*Paley's Evidences, part i. prop. ii. chap. 1.

LECTURE VIII.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

What Miracles prove—Are they alone sufficient to prove a Revelation? Argument from Prophecy—Definition of a Prophecy: Implies Divine Foresight—Characteristics of real Prophecies—Their Force as an Evidence of Revelation—Notice of some particular Prophecies—Argument from the Success of Christianity: Statement and Force of this Argument.

We have shown that miracles are possible, that there is no improbability against them, and that cases may be conceived in which they would be manifestly proper and necessary. It has appeared that God only can work miracles, and that the men who have been employed in them ought to be viewed in no other light than as the instruments by whom his power was exerted. The conclusion from these premises is, that the religion in favour of which miracles have been wrought, is true. We have proved the certainty of the miracles alleged in support of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, and hence we are warranted to account them a Divine revelation.

I do not see that this inference can be rationally disputed. I should presume that if a person were once convinced that the miracles related in the Scriptures were really performed, he would not hesitate to give an assent to the doctrines taught in them. Miracles were signs of the presence of God with those who exhibited these seals, as they have been called, by which their commission to communicate his will was attested. Infidels have asked, What connexion is there between truth and power? meaning that there is no connection, or that the truth of a doctrine cannot be proved by a miracle. They might have asked with equal wisdom, What connexion is there between a man's signature and the validity of the bill or bond which he has subscribed? What connexion is there between the credentials of an ambassador and his right to transact the business of his sovereign? If they could perceive the connexion in these cases, they could see it in the other, unless they were wilfully blind. Were it in the power of men to work miracles, we could draw no inference from them respecting the truth of their tenets, because they might be influenced by corrupt motives, and have a design to deceive. But, believing that God is a holy Being, who will not and cannot deceive, because falsehood is contrary to his nature, we hold that the exertion of his power in favour of any religious system, is the highest evidence of its truth. To suppose the contrary is impiety and blasphemy. Those who witnessed the supernatural works by which the law of Moses and the

gospel of Christ were confirmed, were furnished with the means of being as fully assured that the revelations proceeded from God, as if they had heard him pronounce them with an audible voice: and we, to whom their testimony to the works has been faithfully transmitted, may have equal confidence in the divinity of these revelations.

It has been asserted by some Christian writers, that miracles alone are not sufficient to prove the truth of a doctrine, and that we must take into the account the nature of the doctrine, as well as the miracles. This has always appeared to me to be reasoning in a circle, as Papists do, when they prove the authority of the Scriptures from the church, and the authority of the church from the Scriptures. It completely changes the design of miracles, which are no longer decisive proofs but merely testimonials, which when a man can produce, "if he teaches nothing absurd, much more if his doctrines and precepts appear to be good and beneficial, he ought to be obeyed." So says Dr. Jortin,* and so say others, but with very little wisdom. Who is to determine what is absurd and what is not? May not doctrines which are true seem absurd to the ignorant and prejudiced? Were not the peculiar doctrines of Christianity viewed in this light by both Jews and Gentiles? Who is to judge what is good and beneficial? Are there not exercises and duties of our religion, the goodness of which is known only by the declarations and promises of God, and could not have been ascertained by reasoning *a priori?* The ground on which this opinion rests, is the difficulty of distinguishing true miracles from false. If, by the latter, are meant such signs and wonders as it was intimated by our Lord that false Christs and false prophets would perform, we have already seen that they were merely feats of dexterity. There is reason to believe that the acts of the Egyptian magicians were not exceptions. Let those who talk of miracles as wrought by evil spirits give us a well-attested instance of one. Moses, indeed, has said, "If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams."† You will, however, observe, that this is only a hypothetical case, and seems to have been intended as a general admonition to beware of those who might entice them to idolatry; but we do not find that the case supposed was ever realized, for we read nowhere of false prophets among the Jews who wrought miracles, unless you give this name to the wizards, necromancers, and dealers with familiar spirits, whom all allow to have been of the same class with our own jugglers and fortune-tellers. It ought to be farther observed, that the case supposed is that of a sign given to draw men away from a religion already established by miracles. As God cannot contradict himself, we are sure, without any farther inquiry, that those are false miracles which are designed to seduce us to adopt any opinion or practice which he has forbidden. In such a case, too, the one set of miracles will be contradicted by the other; those which are wrought in attestation of truth, bearing such clear marks of omnipotence as to demonstrate that those by which error is supported have emanated from an inferior power. Thus, although the miracles of the Egyptian magicians had been real, yet their evidence was destroyed by the miracles of Moses, which they were not able to imitate. Was it ever heard that a teacher of error divided the sea before his followers; brought down manna from heaven; stilled a tempest in a moment; fed a multitude with a few loaves; cured all kinds of disease by a word or a touch, and called the dead from the grave? Till some person be produced who supported a system of his own invention by such mighty deeds, we may allow that miracles are sufficient to prove the truth of a revelation, independently of any consideration of its contents. The opposite opinion supposes a capacity in men to decide concerning what is true, and fit, and expedient in religion, which they do not possess. It constitutes reason, in part at least, the judge of revelation, whereas a revelation, being an authoritative declaration of the will of God, demands to be received upon the simple exhibition of its evidence. We are not to inquire whether it is worthy of God, but to believe that it is so, simply because it has manifestly proceeded from him. In a word, this opinion is at variance with the Scriptures, which so often appeal to miracles as a proof of doctrines; and it represents our Lord as having reasoned inconclusively when he said, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake."* "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."† Can any thing be plainer? He rests his claim to be believed solely upon his miracles. Will any person still affirm that miracles are not in themselves sufficient to establish the truth of a doctrine? He must also affirm that our Lord, in the passages quoted, made an unreasonable demand upon his hearers, and that their not believing in him on the ground of his miracles alone, would not have been so criminal as we have been led to suppose.

Our first argument for the truth of revealed religion is founded on the miracles which were wrought to attest it. The next is derived from prophecy; but before we enter upon the illustration of it, we may remark its connexion with the proof of the genuineness of the sacred writings. We can know that certain parts of them are prophetical only by having previously ascertained that they were composed before the events which they profess to foretell. Any doubt upon this subject would destroy the argument; and were there reason to believe that they were posterior to the events, we should be under the necessity of pronouncing them to be forgeries. Hence you perceive, that in this discussion, it was an indispensable preliminary to show that the Scriptures were the productions of the persons to whom they are ascribed.

A prophecy is the annunciation of a future event which could not have been foreknown by natural means. Human knowledge is almost entirely confined to things past and present; with a few exceptions, those which are future are the objects only of conjecture. There are, indeed, certain events which we confidently expect. We believe without any mixture of doubt that in all ages to come, while the world endures, the sun will rise and set, the ocean will ebb and flow, the wind will blow from different points of the compass, and the seasons will change. It requires no prophetic spirit to foretell these events, because they will arise from the constitution and course of nature, or from causes which already exist and are known. It would be a real prophecy if any person could at this moment inform us at what precise period this regular succession will cease; a prophecy, however, which would have no practical effect, because its truth would not be established till the present system had come to a close, when prophecy and miracles will no longer be wanted. We can also, from what we know of certain individuals, draw probable conclusions respecting their actions in given circumstances; but we proceed upon the general principles of human nature, which are as permanent as the laws of matter, and upon our previous acquaintance

* Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, book ii.
† Deut. xiii. 1—3.

* John xiv. 11. † John v. 36.

with the characters, dispositions, and conduct of the persons in question. Superior sagacity consists in quickly and accurately combining the elements of calculations, and anticipating the result. Yet it is almost needless to say, that the best-founded expectations are often disappointed.

Every coincidence between an event and something which has been said before, is not to be accounted a prophecy. You may find in an ancient author passages surprisingly applicable to occurrences which were long posterior; but the agreement is manifestly accidental. There is no evidence that the author had any knowledge of the occurrence; nor were the passages ever supposed to have an original reference to it. It may happen, too, that of a variety of conjectures, some shall be realized: but no person of a sound mind would, for this reason, look upon them as more than conjectures. He would say that the accordance was owing to chance, and was not more wonderful than it is to find, among a multitude of portraits, one which bears a resemblance to an acquaintance without being intended for him. Design enters into the idea of prophecy; that is, the words in which it is expressed were spoken for the avowed purpose of giving notice beforehand of an event, hidden at the time from every mortal eye amidst the darkness of futurity.

But although human foresight could not be the foundation of prophecy, it may be supposed that the knowledge necessary to it might be furnished, not by God, but by superior beings. If there are evil spirits who interfere in the affairs of mankind, and take pleasure in deceiving them, it will not be doubted that they far excel us in intellectual endowments, and may possess the means of extending their discoveries beyond our limited range. "It is easy to conceive Satan," as I have elsewhere observed, "if his preternatural agency upon the mind be admitted, to have enabled the subjects of his inspiration to reveal secrets, because deeds committed in darkness and in the closest retirement are open to the inspection of a spirit. He could farther have made them acquainted with distant transactions, the immediate knowledge of which it was impossible to obtain by natural means. He might have given them some notices of futurity by informing them of such things as he intended to do, or as were already in a train to be accomplished. He undoubtedly can conjecture with much greater sagacity than we, what will be the result in a variety of cases from the superior powers of his mind, his longer and more extensive experience, and his more perfect acquaintance with human nature in general, and the dispositions and circumstances of individuals."* Thus far his knowledge may go; but it is obviously inadequate to such predictions as are found in the records of revelation. It catches a glimpse of the outskirts of futurity, but cannot penetrate into its dark and distant recesses. "A real prophecy, or the prediction of an event which shall be effected by causes not yet in existence, or which depends upon the free agency of men who shall live a hundred or a thousand years hence, we may safely pronounce him to be as incapable of delivering as the most short-sighted of mortals."†

It is probable, that if men had formed a previous idea of prophecy, they would have supposed that it would be distinct and particular, giving a clear description of events, and thus guarding against all misapplication, and against all danger of overlooking the fulfilment. This is the character of predictions written after the event, as we see in the pretended Sibylline Oracles, which are often as plain as historical narrative. But there is an obscurity in the prophecies of Scripture, referrible, however, to a different cause from that studied ambiguity to which the obscurity of the heathen oracles was owing, for they were so framed as to admit an application to the event, whatever it might be. Such was the answer to Pyrrhus, when he was going to make war with the Romans:

> Aio te Æacida Romanos vincere posse:
> Ibis redibis nunquam in bello peribis.

"I say, that thou, O son of Æacus, art able to conquer the Romans: thou shalt go, thou shalt return, thou shalt never perish in war." Or, "I say, that the Romans are able to conquer thee, O son of Æacus: thou shalt go, thou shalt never return, thou shalt perish in war." Of the same kind was the answer of the oracle to Crœsus, when he was going to make war with the Persians: Κροισος Ἁλυν διαβας μεγαλην ἀρχην διαλυσει. "Crœsus, having passed the river Halys, shall overturn a great empire." This was a safe prediction, because it would prove true whether his own kingdom or that of the Persians was subverted. The obscurity which attends the prophecies of Scripture has proceeded from the wisdom of God, who designed to give such notice of future events as should excite a general expectation of them, but not to make the information so perspicuous and minute as to induce men to attempt either to hasten or to impede their fulfilment. They are a part of his moral administration, and were adjusted, like all the other parts of it, to the moral nature of the persons who were to be the instruments of accomplishing his purposes. "As the completion of the prophecy is left for the most part," says Bishop Hurd, "to the instrumentality of free agents, if the circumstances of the event were predicted with the utmost precision, either human liberty must be restrained, or human obstinacy might be tempted to form the absurd indeed, but criminal purpose of counteracting the prediction. On the contrary, by throwing some parts of the predicted event into shade, the moral faculties of the agent have their proper play, and the guilt of an intended opposition to the will of Heaven is avoided."* But the obscurity is not so great as to render it uncertain whether they are prophecies or happy conjectures. It is dispelled by the event; and when the prediction is turned into history, we perceive the exact correspondence. It may be observed, that the degree of obscurity is not equal in all predictions; and that some of them are more minute and explicit than others, insomuch, that on account of their particularity, it has been affirmed, that they must have been written after the events. This was the charge of Porphyry against the prophecies of Daniel.

The argument from prophecy, for the truth of revealed religion, may be thus stated. As it is the prerogative of God alone to declare the end from the beginning, he who predicted future events must have derived his knowledge from inspiration. A prophecy, therefore, like a miracle, attests the commission of the person by whom it was delivered, proves him to be a messenger from God, and stamps the character of truth upon the instructions which he delivered in his name. A prophecy vouches not only for itself, but for all the communications which are connected with it. By bestowing this gift upon an individual, God pointed him out as one whom he had authorized and qualified to declare his will to us; and we ought implicitly to believe the religion which has been published by a succession of prophets, because we are sure, that he who has an absolute control over the minds and hearts of men, would not permit them to mix their own sentiments with the revelation which they were empowered to make, and to impose them upon the world, as of equal authority with the dictates of his wisdom.

Miracles were proofs of religion to those before whom they were wrought; and being fully attested, they are proofs to succeeding generations. Prophecies were not

* Lectures on the Acts, second edition, p. 317. † Ibid.

* Hurd's Works, vol. v. p. 46.

proofs to those who heard them delivered, but serve this purpose to those who see them fulfilled. If it be asked, Why are not miracles continued? we may answer, that they are not necessary, for various reasons; and particularly, because there is a standing evidence of the truth of religion in the prophecies which have been fulfilled, and are fulfilling before our eyes. And, to adopt the words of Bishop Newton, "this is one great excellency of the evidence drawn from prophecy for the truth of religion, that it is a growing evidence, and the more prophecies are fulfilled, the more testimonies there are, and confirmations of the truth and certainty of divine revelation. And, in this respect, we have eminently the advantage over those who lived even in the days of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and his apostles. They were happy, indeed, in hearing their discourses, and seeing their miracles; and doubtless, many righteous men have desired to see those things which they saw, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which they heard, and have not heard them; but yet, I say, we have this advantage over them, that several things, which were then only foretold, are now fulfilled; and what were to them only matters of faith, are become matters of fact and certainty to us, upon whom the latter ages of the world are come." "Miracles may be said to have been the great proofs of revelation to the first ages, who saw them performed; prophecies may be said to be the great proofs of revelation to the last ages, who see them fulfilled."*

After these general observations, I proceed to lay before you some of the prophecies which are found in the Sacred Books.

First, let us consider the prophecies respecting the Jews; and I select those which are contained in the writings of Moses, relating to the future calamities of the nation; and which, at whatever period the Pentateuch may be supposed to have been published, were undoubtedly written long before the event. To go over them minutely would lead us into too long a detail; I shall therefore take notice of only a few particulars. First, He clearly foretells the invasion and conquest of their country. "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance." "He shall eat the fruit of thy cattle and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed."† In these words it is impossible not to see a description of the Romans; who were not neighbours to the Jews, as the Philistines, the Syrians, and the Egyptians were, but had established the seat of their government at a great distance in Italy; who were distinguished by the extent and rapidity of their conquests; spoke a language totally different from that of Judea; first reduced the country into the form of a province, and afterwards laid it waste in the reign of the Emperor Vespasian. In the second place, Moses foretells the dreadful sufferings of the Jews at the time of the conquest. "He shall not regard the persons of the old nor show favour to the young." "He shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down; and thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee." ‡ Let Josephus, an eyewitness, prove how awfully this prediction was verified in the indiscriminate slaughter of men, women, and children, by their unpitying foes, and in the dreadful famine which the wretched inhabitants suffered during the siege of Jerusalem. He relates one instance, and there might be many, of a woman who ate the flesh of her own child; and he says, "that no other city ever suffered such things, as no generation from the beginning of the world so much abounded in wickedness." In the third place, Moses foretells the dispersion of the nation; "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people from the one end of the earth even unto the other."* We all know that the prediction has been fulfilled, and that the present state of the Jews exactly corresponds with it. They have no country, no province, no city which they can call their own, but for more than seventeen centuries have been strangers and wanderers, yet remain distinct. The last circumstance to which I shall direct your attention, is signified in the following words: and there shalt thou serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, wood and stone."† This prediction was long since fulfilled in the fate of the ten tribes, who, wherever they reside, have adopted the false religion of the heathen among whom they sojourn; and has been fulfilled in that of the Jews, who were more lately dispersed by the Romans; for it is well known that in popish countries, particularly in Spain and Portugal, many of them, to avoid persecution, have conformed to the established religion, and become worshippers of images. The whole prophecy is truly wonderful, and affords a striking proof of the divine prescience, when we reflect that it was delivered fifteen hundred years before the events, and foretold the rejection of the Jews, at the very same time when God was taking them to be his peculiar people.

There is a prior prophecy concerning Ishmael, which is worthy of our notice. "He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."‡ It was also foretold that he should become a great nation; but the description, which seems at the first view to relate to himself alone, and was to a certain extent applicable to him, is understood to refer ultimately to his descendants. These are the Arabians, whose character and history exactly correspond with it. The greater part of them have been from time immemorial, and still are, wild men, ranging the deserts, and living upon the spoils which they gather from solitary travellers, from caravans, and from the adjacent countries into which they make frequent incursions. Their hand is against every man, and every man's hand has been against them. They have provoked the hostility of different nations; of Sesostris, the famous king of Egypt; of Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon; of Alexander the Great; and of the Romans; but their attempts to subdue them were baffled. Throughout all past ages they have maintained independence, and dwelt "in the presence of their brethren."

I pass over the prophecy concerning Egypt, "the basest of kingdoms," which has been fulfilled in its constant subjection to foreign domination, and in the poverty and wretchedness of its inhabitants amidst the stupendous monuments of its ancient greatness; and the prophecy concerning Tyre, "the mart of nations." "When you come to it," says Maundrell, "you find no similitude of that glory for which it was so renowned in ancient times, but a mere Babel of broken walls, pillars, and vaults, there being not so much as one entire house left. Its present inhabitants subsist chiefly upon fishing, and seem to be preserved by Divine Providence, as a visible argument how God has fulfilled his word concerning Tyre,‖ that it should be like 'the top of a rock, a place for fishers to dry their nets on.'"

The fate of Babylon was foretold in the following words. "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there;

* Dissertation on the Prophecies. Introd.
† Deut. xxviii. 49—51.
‡ Deut. xxviii. 50. 53.
* Deut. xxviii. 64.
† Ibid.
‡ Gen. xvi. 12.
‖ Ezek. xxvi. 14.

neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces; and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged."* The destruction of a city so extensive, containing magnificent buildings, and surrounded by lofty walls, could have been effected suddenly only by an earthquake. It was the work of time; but every particular has been fulfilled. For centuries the very place where it once stood, the wonder of the world, was unknown. If modern travellers, who think that they have discovered it are right, it is an awful monument of the truth and power of God. It is a mass of ruins, and nothing but ruins, covering the face of the country for miles; and amidst these they have heard the cry of wild beasts, and seen them roaming in their solitary domain. Other particulars connected with its doom are specified; that it should be besieged by the Medes and Persians;† that the Euphrates, which flowed through the midst of it, should be dried up;‡ that its gates should be open to Cyrus, its conqueror;‖ that it should be taken during the dissipation and security of a feast;§ and that the country around it should be turned into a marsh.¶ How exactly these things were accomplished, we learn from the writings of Xenophon and Herodotus.

The prophecies concerning the Messiah comprehend a considerable portion of the Old Testament, and branch out into a great variety of particulars. The prophets foretell the family from which he should spring; the place of his birth; the time of his appearance; his supernatural endowments; the manner of his life; the nature of his doctrine; his miracles; his rejection by his countrymen; his sufferings; his death; his resurrection; his ascension; the establishment of his religion and its progress in the world. They enter into so minute a detail as to give notice of the mode of his death; of the character of the persons in whose company he should die; of the accidental circumstances of presenting vinegar to him on the cross, and casting lots for his garments, and of the piercing of his side with a spear. One prophet writes almost as if he had been a spectator of the sorrowful scene;** and among all the efforts of Grotius to wrest the Scriptures, there is none more wretched and detestable than his abortive attempt to apply that chapter to another person. The unassisted human mind could not have conceived such a character, and such a train of events, as prophecy has described. Nothing similar ever occurred before, or will occur again, while the world endures. When we attentively consider the predictions relative to our Saviour, they divide themselves into two classes, of which the one describes his humiliation, and the other his glory. They predicate of the same subject, things apparently the most inconsistent, which could not have been contrived by any imagination. So impossible has it appeared to the Jews to unite them in one person, that they have dreamed of two Messiahs, to whom they have respectively allotted them. The one is the descendant of Ephraim, who, aided by some of the tribes, shall attempt to deliver the Jews from the power of their enemies, but shall fall in the enterprise. The other is a descendant of David, who will restore the first Messiah to life, raise the departed Jews from the grave, rebuild their temple, and subdue all the nations of the earth. They have fallen into this error by totally misapprehending the character of the Messiah, and the design of his mission. He is represented as a worm and no man, but as a prince higher than the kings of the earth; as a man of sorrows, but anointed with the oil of joy above his fellows; as dying, and yet abolishing death; as despised and rejected of men, and as called the Blessed by the grateful tribes of mankind. Every reader of the New Testament perceives that these discordant attributes meet and harmonize in Jesus of Nazareth, who is both God and man, and who, having abased himself, and submitted to the death of the cross, is exalted at the right hand of the Father, and has received dominion and a kingdom, that all nations and languages should serve him. To him bore all the prophets witness; and as most of their predictions have been punctually fulfilled, we believe that those which remain will also be accomplished in their season.

There are also many prophecies in the New Testament, among which we might notice that which relates to the fall of Jerusalem; but it is in substance the same with the prophecy of Moses, which has been considered. It is, however, more particular, and besides mentioning by name the city which was to be the scene of desolation, it points out, not obscurely, the armies by which it would be destroyed, marks the time of the event, and enumerates the signs which would announce its approach. Three of the gospels, it is universally acknowledged, were published before the catastrophe; but the fourth did not appear for a considerable number of years after it. It is worthy of attention, that it is omitted in the fourth, but is inserted in the other three.*

In the writings of Paul, and in the Revelation of John, there are clear intimations of the rise of a power hostile to the religion and the church of Christ, while professedly it would be connected with both. "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."† The scene of his impious deeds is the temple of God, not that in Jerusalem, which was laid in ruins a short time after these words were written, but the church, which is called the house of the living God. There, he would usurp the attributes and prerogatives of Deity, and claim authority to supersede the ordinances of heaven, and to establish his own laws in their room. We learn from other passages, that this power would erect his throne in the city of Rome; that it would succeed in extending its dominion over nations, and peoples, and tongues; that it would persecute with unrelenting fury those who should refuse to submit to it, and would profusely shed the blood of the saints. It was quite improbable at the time that such a power should ever arise among Christians, few in number, as they comparatively were, and professing a humble and holy religion. It was improbable, that, if it should make its appearance, it should meet with encouragement, as its claims could not succeed, unless men would consent to surrender their spiritual liberty, and yield up their judgments and consciences to the dictates of a self-constituted tyrant. It was improbable that imperial Rome, which, at that moment, reigned over the kings of the earth, and where idolatry displayed its splendour and its triumphs; that Rome, where Christianity had made little progress, and was regarded as a detestable superstition, should at some future period, crouch at the feet of a Christian priest. I need not tell you how exactly these things have been fulfilled in that corrupt, idolatrous, and persecuting church, which derives its name from the seat of the Cæsars; and in its proud, presumptuous head, who calls himself the vicar of Christ, claims infallibility, and requires from his subjects obe-

* Isa. xiii. 19—22. † Isa. xxi. 2. Jer. li. 11.
‡ Isa. xliv. 27. Jer. l. 38. and li. 36. ‖ Isa. xlv. 1.
§ Jer. li. 39. 57. ¶ Isa. xiv. 22, 23. ** Isa. liii.

* Matt. xxiv. 15. &c. Mark xiii. 14, and Luke xxi. 20.
† 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.

dience to his unholy decrees on pain of eternal damnation.

Many of the predictions in the book of Revelation relate to the antichristian power; but it embraces other subjects, and contains a history of the world, as connected with the true church, from the days of John to the second coming of Christ. A considerable part is yet to be fulfilled, and the interpretations which have been given are conjectural. But a considerable part has been fulfilled as different writers have satisfactorily shown; and hence we confidently expect that every particular will be accomplished in its order and season.

This is the second argument for the truth of our religion. The fulfilment of prophecy attests the commission of the prophet, and lays us under an obligation to receive whatever he delivers to us in the name of God.

The third argument for the truth of our religion is founded on its success. I acknowledge that mere success is not a decisive proof of the truth of a religion, because it may be owing to other causes than the justice of its claims. A religion may spread, not indeed rapidly, as the Christian did, but gradually, through its adaptation to the opinions, prejudices, inclinations, and worldly interests of men; great effects may be produced in the course of time by the united influence of artifice and authority, when there is a predisposition to yield to them. We can account in this manner for the progress of idolatry in the heathen world, and for its progress in the Christian church during ages of ignorance. A religion may be rapidly and extensively propagated by force. We have an example in that of Mahomet, which diffused itself in a short time over several countries in the East. The case is very different when a religion succeeds without any external advantages; when it succeeds in the face of strong and continued opposition; when it succeeds, although it be contrary to the opinions, prejudices, inclinations, and worldly interests of those who are prevailed upon to embrace it; and we can account for the fact only upon the hypothesis that it was accompanied with overwhelming evidence, and patronized by the Governor of the world.

I had occasion in another lecture to point out the repugnance of the Christian religion to all the principles by which men are determined in their choice, and I need not to go over the same ground again. It was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks. Each of these classes found something in it which was irreconcilcable to their preconceived opinions. It was a stumbling-block to the Jews, because it proclaimed a suffering Messiah, a spiritual kingdom, and the admission of the Gentiles to the same privileges with the peculiar people. It was foolishness to the Greeks, because, setting aside their learned speculations and their splendid superstitions, it called upon them to acknowledge a God unknown to their ancestors, and a Mediator of whom they had never heard before, and to yield an unhesitating assent to doctrines new, strange, and inexplicable by the principles of philosophy. It is evident that when Jesus Christ published this religion to his contemporaries, he intended it to be the religion of mankind. He intended that it should supersede all other religions, and be the rule of faith and practice in every country and in every age of the world. By what means was this design to be accomplished? We know of one religion which was propagated by the sword; but unlike Mahomet, in this as in every other part of his character, our Lord made no use of carnal weapons to disseminate his religion, and positively disclaimed them: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence."* He would have none to become his disciples but from conviction and choice. But where should he find persons properly qualified to publish and recommend his religion? What influence did he possess over the wise, the learned, and the eloquent, to prevail upon them to devote their time and talents to the service of his gospel? With such persons he had no connexion. They stood aloof from him during his short ministry in Judea; and although by any other man they would have been deemed the fittest instruments, and he would have been anxious to engage them in his cause, Jesus used no means to secure their assistance, and does not appear to have wished for it. From motives which are inexplicable upon the principles of human policy, he took such associates, I might say, as first presented themselves; or rather, he studiously selected those whom every other person would have rejected as being destitute of the necessary qualifications, fishermen and taxgatherers, without learning, without reputation, without friends, men whose appearance was ungainly, whose manners were unpolished, and who, instead of drawing attention to their doctrine by the arts of oratory, would render it still more revolting by the rudeness of their speech. Yet these were chosen to announce a religion sublime in its doctrines, but opposed to the prejudices of all classes; pure in its precepts, but for that reason unacceptable to a licentious age; a religion which aimed at universal dominion, and required the priest, the philosopher, and the statesman to bow to its authority, and become its lowly disciples. In this procedure there is something extraordinary. That Jesus Christ was a wise man, his religion shows; but in this instance, according to the maxims of worldly prudence, he seemed not to display his usual wisdom. There is only one way of accounting for his conduct, and that is, by supposing the truth of his claim to be the messenger of the living God. This being admitted, we must believe that he was certain of success; that he calculated upon it, not from the fitness of the instruments, but from the supernatural power which would be exerted; and that he chose persons so incompetent in themselves for the express purpose of making that power manifest, and furnishing a decisive evidence that his religion was divine. His conduct was the reverse of that of an impostor. He knew that he had truth upon his side, and was sure that it would prevail.

This expectation was realized. The religion preached by publicans and fishermen attracted attention, and was embraced by many of all ranks in Judea, and in other countries. We have the testimony of Tacitus to its extensive propagation even in the days of the apostles, about thirty years after the crucifixion; for he informs us that in the reign of Nero there was *ingens multitudo*, a great multitude of Christians in Rome, many of whom were cruelly put to death by that merciless tyrant.* This testimony is valuable, because it shows in how short a space Christianity had passed from the distant province of Judea to Rome, and with what success it was attended in the capital of the world. We learn from the younger Pliny, who presided over the province of Bithynia in the beginning of the second century, that in that country the gospel could boast of numerous disciples. The superstition, as he calls it, had seized not only cities, but smaller towns and villages; and till he began to use severities against the Christians, the heathen temples were almost deserted, and those who sold victims for sacrifice could hardly find purchasers.† These are testimonies of heathens who could have no interest in magnifying the number of the Christians. We may add to them the testimony of Justin Martyr, about thirty years after Pliny, which, although it should be admitted to be somewhat hyperbolical, asserts the substantial fact, that the new reli-

* John xviii. 36.

* Annal. lib. xv. cap. 44. † Plin. Ep. x. 97, 98.

gion was widely diffused: "There is not a nation, either of Greeks or barbarians, or of any other name, in which prayer and thanksgiving are not offered up to the Father and Maker of all things, in the name of the crucified Jesus."* I subjoin the words of Tertullian, in his Liber Apologeticus who flourished in the latter part of the same century. Addressing the Roman magistrates, he says, "We are but of yesterday, and we have filled every place; your cities, garrisons, and free towns; your camp, senate, and forum; we have left nothing empty but your temples." It is unnecessary to produce passages from other writers to the same effect. It is an historical fact, that Christianity, without any external aid, did make its way in the face of obloquy and persecution, of all the opposition which it encountered from the reasonings of philosophers, and from the edicts and the penalties of civil governments. It was like a ship propelled in its course by an invisible power, although wind and current are against it. The more it was oppressed, the more it grew. Blood was shed, but it proved a seed from which there sprung up a new race of martyrs and confessors. The struggle was prolonged nearly three hundred years, but truth prevailed, and the religion of the man whom his countrymen rejected, was established in all the provinces of the Roman empire.

As the fact cannot be explained upon the principles of reason and experience; as it is a fact which has no parallel in the moral history of mankind, we are led to inquire into it, and to discover, if we can, an adequate cause. Since it cannot be doubted that men in former times had the same understanding and the same feelings which they have now, it would be absurd to imagine that they would submit to the new religion, with all the foreseen consequences of embracing it, unless such evidence had been presented as fully satisfied them that its claim to a divine origin was well founded. Of this evidence the resurrection of its author was an essential part, because he had himself foretold it; and as it was necessary for the vindication of his character from the aspersions thrown upon it, if he had not risen from the grave, not a single person would have admitted his pretensions. His immediate followers would have known that he was an impostor, and would not have exposed themselves to sufferings and death, in order to immortalize a man who had so grossly deceived them. No motive can be conceived which would have induced them to engage in the office of propagating his religion. They must have seen at once, from its nature, that as it was false its success was impossible; and, consequently, they could have no hope of gaining fame, or wealth, or power, by the attempt. The cause was desperate, as their leader had perished, and his promises of supernatural assistance had utterly failed. The apostles, too, when they entered upon their labours, were convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead; but it was necessary that they should convince others of the fact, and if they had not been able to establish it by satisfactory evidence, they would have addressed Jews and Gentiles in vain. The circumstances in which their testimony was delivered, the manifest absence of any sinister motive to which it might be imputed, their confidence, and the consistency which they maintained in the severest trials, might have rendered it worthy of credit in the opinion of some persons of reflection; but to mankind in general, more unquestionable evidence would be necessary; because there was not merely a simple fact to be proved, but a fact involving the most serious consequences, as all who admitted its truth were bound to embrace and maintain the new religion, through good report and bad report, in life and in death. In such a case I do not see that less would have sufficed than miraculous evidence, than the exhibition of such signs, the performance of such works, as demonstrated that the persons who proclaimed the truth of Christianity and the resurrection of its founder, were the ministers and messengers of God. Miracles are the operation of Omnipotence; and if miracles were wrought in favour of revelation, the question is decided. The success of the gospel, notwithstanding the opposition which it had to encounter, is a proof that it was accompanied with supernatural evidence by which incredulity was subdued. To a reflecting mind, this short statement by one of the evangelists will appear to be true, because it is the only statement which accounts for the success of the apostles: "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."*

* Just. Mar. Dial. cum. Tryphon. p. 341.

LECTURE IX.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

Argument from Success of the Gospel, continued—Examination of Gibbon's five secondary Causes—Internal Evidences of Revelation; Its Doctrines concerning God, the Origin of Evil, the Atonement, the Immortality of Man, and future Retribution; The Purity and Universality of its moral Code; The Character of Christ; and the harmony of its Parts—The Effects of Christianity.

We have seen that the success of Christianity in the first ages presupposes miracles, which alone could satisfy of its truth those to whom it was published. God could have rendered unbelief impossible by an immediate revelation to each individual, which would have produced the same conviction that was felt by the prophets and apostles; but he would deal with men as rational beings, by presenting such evidence as was sufficient to all who should candidly attend to it, and would leave them without excuse if they rejected his word. We find, however, that in vain were miracles wrought before the eyes of many in that age. The Jews, who had seen the wonderful works of our Saviour, crucified him, and evaded the evidence which they afforded of his divine mission, by ascribing them to demoniacal assistance. The Gentiles resisted the argument on the similar pretext of magic. It follows that those who were convinced must have got over this and other prejudices equally strong, and seen something in the miracles themselves and in the religion which they were designed to attest, which satisfied them that the whole dispensation was from God. This effect is not to be attributed to their superior discernment; for the greater part of the converts were not distinguished for mental capacity, but were such persons as are still found among the lower classes of society, persons poor and uneducated; yet this was not the character of them all, for the gospel numbered among its friends not a few individuals of learning and elevated station. But the more we think of them and of the other class, the more we shall be convinced that divine influence upon their minds and hearts was necessary to overcome the obstacles to a cordial reception of the truth, and to make them obedient to the faith. This is the account which the first preachers of Christianity give of their success, when they tell us that the spiritual weapons which they used were "mighty through God," to bring the thoughts of men into captivity to Christ.† The influence to which I refer could not be proved, like miracles, by ocular demonstration; but every man who fully and seriously examines the matter will be sensible that it must have been exerted; and if it be admitted that the invisible but efficacious power of God accompanied the publication of the gospel, it is no longer a question

* Mark xvi. 20. † 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

whether it was an invention of men or a revelation from heaven.

"Our curiosity," says Gibbon, "is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry an obvious but satisfactory answer may be returned; that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author."* These are complimentary and insidious words; for he proceeds to point out, what he calls the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church; and they are such as, if true, would divest our argument of its force, and leave nothing to be contemplated which might not be found in the success of any other religion.

The first cause which he assigns is "the inflexible and intolerant zeal of the Christians." Without stopping to animadvert upon the opprobrious epithets by which their zeal is characterized, we may ask every rational man whether this can be considered as an adequate cause. The zeal of a party may excite public attention, and gain some proselytes; but the more vehement it is, it is the more likely to defeat its end, by stirring up a zeal of equal vehemence in its antagonists. This zeal could, at first, be displayed only by a few, who would have been overwhelmed by the multitude of their opponents; for, if Gibbon refers to the zeal of the Christians when they had become numerous, and it was then only that it could have made an impression upon mankind, he puts the cause after the effect, and it remains to account for their previous increase. How did they grow up to such a number, that their united activity was capable of contending effectually with the formidable army of Jews and Gentiles? Besides, it is altogether inconceivable that mere zeal would have gained men over to a religion so contrary to all their prejudices, and habits and interests.

The second cause is; "the doctrine of immortality;" but to the Jews this was no novelty, and the Gentiles cared little about it, although their philosophers made it a subject of speculation. Men gave themselves no more concern about the future state than they do at present, when, with the exception of a few, they studiously keep it as much as possible out of view. It is contrary to experience to suppose, that the doctrine of immortality had such powerful attractions as to recommend to mankind at large the religion by which it was taught. To the ambitious, the covetous, the sensual, the vicious of every description, the Christian doctrine is revolting, because the happiness which it promises is reserved for the pure alone, and to others it announces an eternity of suffering. A heaven without a hell would have been more pleasing to the age when the gospel appeared, especially if that heaven had resembled a Mahometan paradise.

He assigns as a third cause, "the miraculous powers which were ascribed to the primitive church," but, at the same time, labours to prove that no such powers were possessed, and that the claim to them was founded on imposture, and supported by credulity. That, however, miracles were performed in attestation of the gospel, we have already shown; and as the fact was admitted by the most virulent enemies of the faith, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, it was too late for an infidel in the eighteenth century to deny it. Pretended miracles were common in the first ages, and had lost their credit; so that if those to which the Christians appealed had been of the same character, they would have injured instead of assisting their cause. If their miracles did draw attention, and produce conviction, it could only be because they were clearly distinguished from the counterfeits, and bore unequivocal marks of a supernatural origin.

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. 15.

The "pure and austere morals" of the Christians are mentioned as the fourth cause; but their virtues, as he represents them, were calculated to excite contempt and opposition; for they consisted in a mean-spirited repentance, a monkish abstinence from innocent pleasures, and aversion to the active duties of public life. If they were in reality distinguished by genuine virtues, whence did they originate? in what soil were they produced? They cannot be traced to the spirit of Judaism, which was superstitious and intolerant; nor to heathenism, that overflowing source of corruption of manners. Their virtues were inspired by their religion, and may well be believed to have often made an impression in its favour. The testimony of Pliny to the purity of their manners is well known. Tertullian informs us that it was common to say, such a person is a good man, but he is a Christian. The only defect in his character was his religion.

The last secondary cause is the "union and discipline of the Christian republic." But a union which should have the effect of changing the established order of things presupposes numbers; for the combined efforts of a few would be as inefficient as the human breath is to ruffle the surface of a lake. Before, then, the union of the Christians could be conceived to advance their cause, a society must have been formed of considerable extent; and how is its existence to be accounted for? How came it to exist and to make progress prior to the time when its union was brought into operation? Here again we have the effect put before the cause; the success of a religion attributed to the union of its friends, while every person sees that it must have gained friends before they could unite. But this union, to which such mighty effects are ascribed, is merely assumed by the historian for the present purpose. No man has described, in more glowing colours, the disputes and divisions of the followers of Christ. Differences of opinion began at an an early period, even in the days of the apostles; they increased as time advanced; and while Christianity was in a state of persecution, its professed advocates exhibited the unedifying spectacle of doctrine against doctrine, sect against sect, and anathemas hurled against each other by those who called themselves the disciples of the same Master.

I do not think that these secondary causes, which, however, Gibbon meant to be understood as the only ones, would give any satisfaction to a candid inquirer. It would still remain to be explained by what means a few Jews, who were the first followers of Jesus of Nazareth, without all human qualification for the enterprise, succeeded in propagating a new and strange system, opposed to all the prejudices and worldly interests of mankind; by what means they gained numerous converts in the various provinces and cities of the Roman empire, and those converts, pursuing the same course, advanced in the face of persecution till their cause triumphed, and Christianity became the religion of the state. This is no ordinary phenomenon; there is nothing similar to it in the history of human affairs. I do not believe that Gibbon was satisfied with his own account. But the infidel must say something against Christianity; and if it raise a laugh, or impress the giddy and inconsiderate, he has gained his end.

I have considered the external evidences of revealed religion, miracles, and prophecy, and to these have added the argument derived from the success of the gospel. I proceed to give a short view of the internal evidences which arise from a survey of its contents. Is there any thing in the nature of our religion which would lead us to ascribe it to a supernatural origin? Are its articles such that we could not conceive them to have been invented by the publishers? Are its doctrines and precepts, as far as reason can judge, agreeable to its best and clearest dictates? Does the whole

system appear to be worthy of God, and suitable to the condition of man? Does it give us information upon subjects of manifest importance, and throw light upon topics into which men had anxiously inquired, but without success?

Let us attend, in the first place, to its doctrine concerning the existence and unity of God. This doctrine is so clearly taught in the New Testament, that it is unnecessary to refer to particular passages. I shall only observe, that there are three descriptions of the Supreme Being, which, in a few simple words, convey more just and elevated ideas of him than the most elaborate and splendid compositions of human genius and eloquence. "God is a spirit."*—"God is light."†—"God is love."‡ The sublimity of the conception and the comprehensiveness of the expression are unrivalled; and, coming from persons confessedly unlearned, may well excite our astonishment, and make us ask, whence had they this wisdom? wisdom in the presence of which philosophy is abashed. Did Socrates or Plato, or any other celebrated man, ever thus announce the spirituality, the purity, and the benevolence of the first Cause? But our Saviour and his apostles lived in an age of learning and science, and may have been indebted to others for these discoveries. I am not aware that any person has been so foolhardy as to say so; but if he had, we could have confounded him at once, by calling upon him to point out the source from which they were borrowed. But let us go back to an earlier period. Let us look into the Old Testament, and we shall find the same doctrine from the beginning to the end of it. We shall find, that while polytheism prevailed in every region of the earth, and the wise men of the heathen world were "feeling after God, if haply they might find him," he was known to a nation which infidels call barbarous, and known at the commencement of their history, while they were surrounded by the grossest idolaters. Let us transfer ourselves in idea to the age when Moses lived; let us reflect that, in that age, reason had not been cultivated as it now is, nor had science lent its aid to confirm its conclusions concerning the Author of the universe; that the nation to which he belonged was a race of peasants and mechanics, who had been long in a state of oppression; and the question naturally occurs, how came Moses to possess such noble conceptions of the Deity? Among the teachers of theology in the ancient world, he stands on a proud eminence. In the most polished nations we find them inquiring, doubting, occasionally stumbling upon the truth as by accident, and then starting away from it, bewildered in a maze of Mystery, involving themselves and their disciples in midnight darkness, and terminating their laborious researches by acquiescing in the errors and superstitions of the vulgar. We are told indeed, that Moses was instructed in all the learning of Egypt; and, as the inhabitants of that country were celebrated for their wisdom, it may be supposed that he derived purer ideas of theology from them. We do not exactly know what was the theological system of the Egyptians in his days; but it appears from his writings, that the true God was unknown to them, for their haughty monarch exclaimed, "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey him? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go."‖ It would be strange to imagine that Moses was indebted for his sublime doctrine to a people, distinguished from all heathen nations by the number and the baseness of their gods, and whose priests, the depositories of all learning, which they carefully concealed as a thing too sacred to be exposed to the eyes of the public, seem, from some notices of their tenets which have come down to us, to have been not a whit wiser than the philosophers of other countries. When we see Moses excelling all his contemporaries, and all who succeeded him for many centuries; when we observe that, at an early period of the world, he possessed, without human instruction, a degree of knowledge which has never been surpassed, and the accuracy of which subsequent discoveries have confirmed, what can we conclude but that he was instructed by the God whose existence he proclaimed? Who else could have told him that there was only one God, eternal, independent, and almighty, the Creator and Governor of the universe? It is impossible to account in any other way for the discovery which he made, and all others missed, and for the unhesitating manner in which he announced it, while the sages of antiquity groped and disputed in the dark. If it should be said that this knowledge was transmitted to him from his ancestors, our reasoning is not affected, but carried back to a period still more remote; and we again ask, how came they to be acquainted with a doctrine of which others were ignorant? How were they reclaimed from idolatry, which, according to the narrative, was practised before the call of Abraham, by himself and his progenitors?

Let us observe, in the second place, the account which revelation gives of the relation in which this great Being stands to men. It represents him as the Creator of our race, and likewise of the earth which we inhabit, and the heavens which shed their light and influences upon us. There is a sublimity in the idea of creation, or the production of all things out of nothing; and it is an idea peculiar to revelation: so far was it from occurring to speculative men, that not one of them ever dreamed of it, and it was pronounced by them all to be absurd and impossible. According to them, the universe had always existed as we now see it; or it was reduced to its present form by divine power, out of pre-existing materials. It is an idea consonant to the purest dictates of reason; for, the more we reflect, the more shall we be convinced that inert unconscious matter could not be self-existent, and that every being, the duration of which is measured by time, must have had a beginning. Yet we owe this idea, so grand, so worthy of the Deity, not to any of the mighty geniuses whose memory is venerated by an admiring world, but to the leader, as infidels call him, of a barbarous people. This idea pervades the volume of inspiration. Associated with it, is the view which the Scriptures give of the government of the world. It is known that some speculatists among the heathen excluded God from all concern in human affairs; and that, although others admitted a providence, and said many specious things upon the subject, they confounded it with fate or inexplicable necessity, a chain of causes and effects, by which men and gods were bound. Nature did every thing; and the series of events was the order of nature; but the rational deduction from the creation of the universe, is its constant subjection to the will and power of its Author. The machine having been constructed and put in motion, is preserved from waste and disorder by its Maker. The mind is relieved and satisfied by this idea. There is a confidence in what are called the laws of nature, when we view them as enacted and executed by the Deity himself; there is additional sublimity and beauty in its scenes, when we consider him as present, and revealing himself to us by his works. There is a fitness in events which reconciles us to them, when they are regarded as his appointments. A providence ever vigilant and active, which extends to small as well as to great events, cares for individuals, and directs all the incidents in their lot, administers many moral lessons to us, calls forth the best emotions of the heart, corrects, consoles, and animates us, elevates our thoughts on all occasions to God, and exhibits him as the object of our reverence and our gratitude. It is a doctrine at once philosophical and pious; and it is so worthy of Him who is the Parent of the human race, that it recommends itself to

* John iv. 24. † John i. 5. ‡ John iv. 8. ‖ Exod. v. 2.

our approbation, and attests the truth of the only religion by which it is fully and clearly taught.

In the third place, revealed religion gives the only satisfactory account of the present state of things. In the surrounding world and the circumstances of men, we see numerous proofs of intelligence and goodness; but we cannot say of the whole system, that it displays perfect order, and unmixed benevolence. There are many instances of apparent discrepance, and real severity. This globe has evidently suffered a dreadful convulsion, by which its external structure has been deranged, and has once been covered with water, which must have destroyed the whole or the greater part of its inhabitants. On its surface, while there are plains and mountains clothed with herbs and trees, there are immense tracts which yield nothing for the support of animal life, and are doomed to perpetual sterility. We find also, that in many places there are volcanoes, or burning mountains, which discharge stones, ashes, lava, and boiling water, by which the labours of men are laid desolate, and great havoc is made of human life; and that by earthquakes, whole cities are overthrown, and the unsuspecting inhabitants are buried in the ruins. These are occasional evils; but there are inconveniences of a more permanent nature, which indicate, that he who governs the world did not intend that it should be a place of rest and pure enjoyment to man. In one region, he is scorched by the heat of the vertical sun; and in another, he shivers amidst frost and snow; and although it has been remarked, that, unlike other animals, he can accommodate himself to every climate, yet, wherever there is excess in the temperature, he suffers in a greater or a less degree. He is at all times compelled to labour, that he may earn a subsistence; at all times, liable to have his hopes disappointed, particularly by the inclemency of the seasons; at all times, subject to infirmities of body and mind, to diseases of various kinds, and to death. From these things it appears, that although man and the system with which he is connected, were evidently intended for each other, there is not a complete adaptation. And why is it not perfect? Has this proceeded from a want of wisdom or a want of goodness? Reason will not permit us to impute either to the Deity: and we must therefore suppose, that some cause has arisen, which has deranged his original plan, and, to a certain extent, interrupted his benevolence. The ancients said that nature acts like a stepmother, meaning, that it does not treat us with all the kindness and tenderness of a parent. Nature is a word without meaning; and in a rational system of theology, can signify only the Author of nature. This then is the question. Why does he treat us with severity? And unenlightened reason cannot return a firm and satisfactory answer to it. The existence of moral evil was acknowledged in every age; it was too palpable to be overlooked; but whence it came, or how it originated, was a problem, which men, without revelation, were incompetent to solve. To suppose them to have been created with a propensity to evil, was to impeach the purity and the benevolence of the Creator. To ascribe it to the maligunity of matter, was to talk nonsense; for matter has no moral qualities, and could not corrupt the mind, although placed in the closest connexion with it. The Scripture history throws light upon the mysterious subject. I do not say that it removes every difficulty, and furnishes an answer to every objection; but it states a fact which helps us to explain present appearances. It informs us, that in the primeval state of man, none of those physical evils which he now suffers, existed; that while he was innocent, all nature smiled upon him and ministered to him: that he lost his innocence by his own fault, and not by an act of his Maker, and being himself corrupted, has communicated the taint to his posterity; that a change immediately took place in the surrounding scene, which did not efface all vestiges of the divine goodness, but adapted it to the circumstances of a guilty race; and that barrenness, toil, inclement seasons, and, in a word, all natural evils, were the appointed penalties of transgression. It recommends this narrative, that it accounts for moral and physical evil, without impeaching the wisdom, and goodness, and holiness of the Creator. It shows that the exercise of another principle was called for, namely, justice, which suits its acts to the merit or demerit of its subjects, leaves to the innocent the enjoyment of their privileges, but allots to the guilty, stripes, and chains, and death. Thus we understand why man, the offspring of God, is treated as an alien; why the place of his habitation is so incommodious; why his days are few and full of trouble, and his last abode is in the dust. Unassisted reason is astonished at these things, and has been tempted to deny a providence, and even the existence of an intelligent Governor of the universe. Revelation furnishes a solution of the difficulties; it explains the phenomena; and its discoveries, so seasonable and satisfactory, afford a presumption at least of its truth.

In the next place, it being admitted that men are sinners, and there being in their circumstances evident tokens of the displeasure of their Maker, let us observe what revelation teaches concerning the means of regaining his favour, and consider whether it does on this account recommend itself to our approbation. Amidst the depravity of human nature, conscience remains, and performs its office so far as to convince men that they are guilty, and occasionally to excite uneasy apprehensions and forebodings. The following words occur in the Scriptures, but as they were spoken by a person who did not belong to the Jewish nation, they may be quoted as expressive of the natural sentiments and feelings of the human mind: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"* We see the strong workings of fear, an anxiety to appease the Deity, and a willingness to make the most costly sacrifices. Into the origin of sacrifices we need not at present inquire. If they were devised by men themselves, as some have supposed, contrary to all probability, it will follow, that reason itself dictates that an atonement is necessary, and that it can be made only by the substitution of a victim in the room of the offender. If they were divinely appointed, as there is every ground to believe, the continuance of the practice among nations who had lost the memory of the original institution, is a proof that reason approved of it as a fit expedient for averting the anger of the Deity. But although the idea of propitiation was familiar to Jews and Gentiles, such a sacrifice as the Christian religion exhibits was altogether new. Men had already resorted to human sacrifices, as more valuable and efficacious than those of brute animals; but it had never occurred to any of them that the sufferer must be more than man. It had never occurred to them that a divine person must by incarnation become the victim; that the blood of a divine person, united to man, must flow for the expiation of sin. There is something in this idea so foreign to all our modes of thinking, so utterly improbable, so apparently impossible, that we cannot conceive it to have spontaneously arisen in the mind of any man, however wild is the imagination, and however extravagant are its combinations. A God becoming a man; a God dying on a cross for his creatures! who could ever have entertained such a thought? It seems to bear upon it the signature of a supernatural

* Micah vi. 6. 7.

origin; it seems that nothing could have suggested it but revelation. From its singularity, its insulated nature, its total want of connexion with all other ideas, it seems to possess the character of truth. If it should be said, that its strangeness cannot be justly accounted a proof of its conformity to truth, and that we might for the same reason give reality to the most monstrous figments, let it be observed, that this idea is recommended by its manifest fitness to serve the purpose for which it is introduced. By such a sacrifice as is supposed, the end of sacrifices is accomplished, and the mind has sure ground to rest upon in its expectation of forgiveness. It required little wisdom to perceive that animal sacrifices could not be an adequate atonement; and this was the reason that, in despair, human sacrifices were resorted to. Yet even after these, the guilty could not avoid doubts and suspicions, which led them on new occasions to repeat the bloody rite. But if the sacrifice of Christ be admitted, there can be no doubt that its intrinsic value has fully satisfied the demands of justice, that this one offering was sufficient. We cannot but see its consonance to our best conceptions of the character of God. There are two perfections which enlightened reason will ascribe to him, goodness and justice; and of both there are clear indications in the proceedings of Providence. This sacrifice affords scope for the exercise of both. It allows goodness to effect its purpose, and secures its rights to justice. There may still be difficulties in the case which we cannot fully explain; but upon the whole, this interposition in behalf of our fallen race appears worthy of our merciful and righteous Governor; and it has been found to be the only expedient which can give relief to the conscious sinner, condemned by himself and trembling in the presence of his Judge.

Again, revealed religion gives the only distinct and satisfactory account of the future destiny of man. It has been the general expectation that he will survive the stroke of death. Men have believed that there was a principle in them distinct from the body, called the soul, the mind, or the spirit, which will exist in another state. Yet this belief, as we have seen, was disturbed by doubt, and the most profound speculations could never give rise to certainty. Philosophers affirmed and denied, and declared with their last breath, that they did not know whether they were to sink into an eternal sleep or to retain conscious existence. The first thing which must strike an attentive reader of the sacred volume, is the confidence of the writers in speaking of this subject. There is no hesitation, no comparison of probabilities, no argumentation, but strong, positive assertion. The immortality of the soul is assumed as an unquestionable fact, is authoritatively announced. How do we account for this difference? Were the writers persons of greater sagacity than other inquirers? Or did they, considered as men, enjoy any peculiar advantages for the discovery of truth? Infidels will not admit their superiority in these respects; nor can we contend for it, who know that, with a few exceptions, they were illiterate men, and belonged to a nation by no means distinguished for intellectual accomplishments. How then did they come to speak, in the most decisive tone, about a point which had perplexed the mightiest geniuses of the heathen world? If any other reason can be assigned but their inspiration, let it be produced, and we will attend to it; but till then we must be permitted to say, that their wisdom descended from the Father of lights. Observe, too, how different are their representations of the future state from those of heathen authors. The latter divided it into two regions, the one of happiness and the other of misery; but in assigning their respective inhabitants, it is not to be supposed, that with their imperfect ideas of morality they would make a proper allotment. The place of punishment was peopled by persons guilty of such crimes as are universally condemned; but who were admitted into Elysium? It seems to have been reserved chiefly for heroes, poets, philosophers, and statesmen; as if courage, genius, and political wisdom were above all things pleasing to the gods. We know, however, that these have no necessary connexion with virtue, and are often disjoined from it; and no man who is but slightly imbued with the doctrines of revelation would admit the thought, that such qualifications entitle their possessors to future felicity, or in any degree prepare them for it. It proves the superiority of the Christian scheme, that while it holds out the hope of happiness to the mean as well as to the illustrious, to the illiterate as well as to the learned, it promises it only to the morally good, without any respect to intellectual accomplishment. The future state of the Scriptures is manifestly calculated to serve the only purpose for which it ought to have a place in a religious system,—to advance the interests of virtue, to promote the perfection of human nature, to excite men to the duties of piety, charity, and justice, and not to tempt them to the pursuits of ambition and vain-glory. And its tendency to these effects recommends it as a doctrine of truth, as a communication from the Governor of the universe, of whose administration we must conceive it to be the ultimate end, to establish the authority of his moral laws over mankind. In short, as the hell of revelation is appointed for the guilty and impenitent, its heaven is the abode of those alone who have mortified their passions, and obeyed the voice of their Maker; or, to use its own language, have lived "soberly, and righteously, and godly." It is beyond the limits of probability, that the sacred writers should of their own accord have thought of such a heaven; that, having naturally the same views and feelings with other men, who are so much influenced by their senses, and devoted to the pleasures of the world, they should have conceived the happiness of the future state to consist solely in spiritual enjoyments. The Elysium of the ancients bore no resemblance to it, and nothing is more different from it than the paradise of Mahomet. It is not therefore a conjecture, or a creation of fancy, but a reality, the knowledge of which they derived from a supernatural source. There is another peculiarity in the Christian doctrine of immortality, namely, that it relates to the body as well as to the soul. This part of man was left out of the theories of the heathens. It was disposed of after death according to the funeral rites of each nation, and then forgotten. This was a capital defect in their system. The body being an essential part of human nature, it may reasonably be expected to share the fate of the individual to whom it belonged, and whose instrument it was in his virtuous or vicious deeds. It is incredible that it should have been created for a temporary purpose; it would seem, *a priori*, that it would be preserved as long as the soul. Experience, indeed, shows us that it dies, and to all appearance is lost; but to him who reflected upon its intimate connexion with the soul, and their harmonious co-operation for a long series of years, the natural desire of all men to continue the union, and the violence with which it is dissolved, its resurrection would not be so improbable as it was pronounced to be by the Gentiles, who were prejudiced by absurd notions of the malignity of matter. The Christian doctrine of immortality is complete. It provides for the future existence of man; and while it is more consonant to reason than the partial system of heathenism, it excites attention by its novelty, and may be justly regarded as an intimation from Him who does nothing in vain, and having created man will preserve him for ever as a monument of his goodness or his justice.

Once more, we may found an argument for the truth of revealed religion upon its precepts, the general excellence of which even some infidels have been compelled to admit. Had not our religion been, to a certain

extent, a moral system,—had it not enjoined the great duties which we owe to God and to man,—we could not have acknowledged it as a divine revelation. The dictates of reason and conscience in favour of piety, justice, and fidelity, prove that these are agreeable to the will of God; and, consequently, we are justified in rejecting any system in which they are discarded or not inculcated, as bearing upon its face the character of imposture. But it is not because our religion teaches morality that we receive it as a revelation, but because it teaches such morality as is found in it. The Christian law is perfect; it embraces all the duties of man, and lays the foundation of the highest attainments in virtue; and were it universally obeyed, the innocence of the golden age would be revived, and the earth would be an unvaried scene of peace and good will. Now, let it be observed by whom this law was given to the world. It was never alleged that they were distinguished by eminence in intellectual vigour, by literary accomplishments, by metaphysical acumen, or by large experience of human life. The greater part of them, confessedly, could lay no claim to these qualifications. Yet they have delivered a code which far surpasses the most celebrated laws and precepts of the legislators and wise men of the heathen world. To what cause can we ascribe their superiority? If their wisdom was more than human, it must have been derived from a superhuman source. Since infidels will not admit this inference, let them substitute a better one. It is certain that the moral law of the Scriptures excels every other law in its injunctions and prohibitions, and in its motives. It inculcates duties which were omitted in other systems, and condemns practices which they tolerated and approved. Among duties, it prescribes humility, meekness, the forgiveness of injuries, and the love of our enemies, which had been considered as indications of a mean and dastardly spirit; and it restrains the sensual appetites, to which the best of the philosophers gave ample encouragement, both by their precept and by their example. It requires us to renounce the world as a source of happiness; not like the Stoics, in a fit of pride and self-sufficiency, but from a deliberate conviction of its vanity, and a decided preference of heavenly things. So great is the contrast, that the virtuous man of the heathen world, as described by themselves, would now be regarded as a monster, and those who think otherwise, either know nothing of the matter, or voluntarily shut their eyes; whereas the virtuous man of revelation, when compared with him, is a being of a superior order, pure, benevolent, and devout, happy in himself, and a blessing to others. Such, at least, is the pattern which every Christian is called to imitate, and all the doctrines and promises of religion tend to promote his conformity to it. Human laws are concerned only with our actions, but the law of the Scriptures extends its authority to the heart, and regulates its movements. The sinful act is not condemned with greater severity than the principle from which it proceeded. The law of man says only, "Thou shalt not steal;" but the law of Scripture goes farther, and says, "Thou shalt not covet." The law of man forbids adultery; but this law forbids the first emotion of criminal desire: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."* There is one remark still to be made, that the sacred writers placed duty upon its proper basis, the principle of piety, unlike other moralists, who found it upon the deductions of reason, the fitness of things, and views of private and public good. Thus they sanctify our duty, by rendering it obedience to the Author of our being, and take the most effectual measure to enforce the performance of it by interposing his paramount authority. It is the will of God which they call us to obey; it is the hope of his approbation which they propose as the animating motive, and his glory as the end. Separated from piety, morality is merely a matter of decorum or of interest; in connexion with it, it is the homage of creatures to their Creator.

Suppose it to have been possible for the sacred writers to have invented this code of morality, would they have done so? Would impostors have laboured to subject the world to a law so holy; a law which in the first place, condemned themselves for presuming to use the name of God with a design to deceive their fellowmen? Would they who set up with a gross violation of truth and of charity, have been anxious to guard others against evil thoughts and contrivances? Would men, who retained no reverence for the Supreme Being, have placed him at the head of the system, and discovered a jealous care of his honour, a desire to make him the object of universal respect and love? The precepts of our religion are an irresistible proof that it did not emanate from bad men; and good men would not have passed it on the world as divine, if it had originated from themselves. They might have presented it to the public as their view of a subject, about which so many have delivered their sentiments; but they would have given it in such a form, and accompanied it with such declarations, as would have satisfied all that it was a work of their own.

There are some other internal evidences which I shall briefly mention, as our limits will not permit me to enlarge upon them.

The character of the Founder of our religion is not a human invention, it must have been drawn from actual observation. It exhibits the union of properties and qualities which were never associated before; qualities so unlike, that it was apparently impossible that they should meet in the same individual, the attributes of Godhead, and the infirmities of humanity. Had an attempt been made to delineate such a character from fancy, it would have failed; the one class of properties would have been obscured or destroyed by the other. But in the New Testament this singular character is supported throughout, in a great diversity of scenes, and on the most trying occasions; in so much that, in whatever point of view we contemplate it, we perceive a perfect accordance of all its parts. The sacred writers had seen it; and if the Son of God appeared in our nature, the religion of the Scriptures is true.

The manner in which the books are composed furnishes another argument. I have already remarked upon their artlessness, as a strong presumption of their truth, and upon the simplicity with which they relate the most wonderful facts, which can be accounted for only by the supposition that they had no design to deceive, and that, being convinced themselves, they deem nothing more necessary than to act the part of faithful historians. In many parts of Scripture we meet with instances of sublimity which throw all examples of it in profane authors into the shade. The taste and judgment of that man who should think of placing them upon a level, would not be envied. They are found in both the Old and the New Testament, and the most sublime book in the world is the Revelation of John. The true account of this superiority is, that the prophets and apostles did not speak of themselves.

I call your attention, in the next place, to the harmony of all the parts of revelation. I do not here consider the objection founded on the discrepancies which have been pointed out, particularly in the historical books, because these do not affect the present argument, which relates to the system unfolded in the Scriptures. From the age of Moses to the days of our Saviour, there was an interval of fifteen hundred years; and how much

* Matt. v. 27, 28.

the manners and religion of other nations have changed in a shorter space, every person knows. The Jews had passed through all the vicissitudes of liberty and servitude, of peace and war. They must have made progress in knowledge and arts, and were, in many respects, a different people, at the close of that long period, from their fathers immediately after their deliverance from Egypt: yet we find the same scheme pursued throughout their successive generations, and the followers of Christ appealing to the testimony of Moses in favour of their doctrine. The Christ of the New Testament is, in all points, the Messiah of the Old; the character of God is the same; and so also are the moral laws, the doctrines and the promises, with no other difference but the greater clearness and fulness of the last revelation. There is, indeed, a great dissimilarity between the two dispensations, but they are not opposed to each other; the former prefigured what was accomplished in the latter; they are parts of one whole; different modes employed by the wisdom of God for revealing his will, and communicating his blessings to mankind. Here, then, is a surprising phenomenon; an unanimity where there was no concert, kept up for fifteen centuries amidst many revolutions in external affairs, and in customs and opinions. During the interval, new religions had arisen, and old ones had disappeared; systems of philosophy had flourished and decayed; but the public creed of one people had undergone no alteration. What can we say, but that error is evanescent, while truth is eternal? Do we not perceive a proof of divine interference in overruling the minds of so many individuals, and making them think the same thoughts and speak the same words?

Lastly, we may deduce an argument for our religion from its effects. It has changed the state of those nations which have embraced it, and introduced a degree of knowledge, of morality, of civilization, and of domestic happiness, of which there was no experience before its appearance. It has humanized the general manners, and produced many individual examples of virtue, to which no other religion can present a parallel. Is that an imposture which has reclaimed the nations from idolatry, and raised peasants to a rank in the moral scale far above Socrates or Antoninus? Put the question to unprejudiced reason, and she will answer in the negative.

These are some of the internal evidences of the truth of our religion; evidences which would present themselves to a competent inquirer on examining the religion viewed by itself, independently of the external proof arising from miracles and prophecy. Put the volume in which it is contained, into the hands of a person previously acquainted with the scanty and dubious discoveries of unassisted reason, and having no object in view but to discover the truth, and although I do not say that he would be immediately convinced of the justness of its claim to a supernatural origin, yet I have no doubt that he would deem the subject worthy of farther inquiry, would admit that the claim possessed a considerable degree of probability, and would yield to it, in its full extent, as soon as any part of the external evidence was laid before him.

LECTURE X.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

Objections considered: That the Light of Nature is sufficient: That the diffusion of Christianity is partial: That Revelation contains Mysteries and Doctrines contrary to Reason: That the Scriptures relate trivial and absurd Facts—Give false Ideas of God—And abound with Contradictions.

The evidence with which revelation is accompanied, is sufficient to satisfy a candid mind. It is not indeed irresistible, that is, so overpowering that every person to whom it is presented is necessarily convinced; but it affords a rational ground of belief. We do not ask, and it is impossible to obtain the highest evidence in the conduct of our worldly affairs; we are obliged to act upon probabilities, and often upon a mere presumption, and yet we do not consider this as a reason why we should fold our arms, and passively wait for events. I do not mean that the evidence in favour of revelation is of this low kind. It is far superior to the evidence which we have for the success of any of our worldly enterprises; if carefully examined and impartially weighed, it will be found to leave no room for reasonable doubt; and accordingly, it has produced a firm persuasion in the minds of thousands, among whom were not a few of the most distinguished talents. Still, however, it is moral evidence, which requires to be canvassed with a mind freed from prejudice, and prepared to admit the conclusion to which the premises shall lead. It is evidence which may not be perceived, if only a superficial glance is taken of it; and which may appear defective, if viewed through the medium of misrepresentation, or under the influence of a state of mind unfavourable to the discovery of religious truth. If these things be taken into the account, it will not be surprising that Christianity, although bearing the clear marks of a heavenly origin, has not met with universal reception. Even miracles failed, in some instances, to convince those before whose eyes they were wrought; not because the miracles were suspected to be false, but because the persons, being unwilling to embrace the religion which they attested, contrived to evade the evidence by theories which accounted for them without a divine interposition. The Gentiles attributed them to magic, and the Jews to demoniacal influence. The true reason of resorting to these subterfuges, was the repugnance of the system to their preconceived opinions, and their secular interests. Christ crucified was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks.

We need not wonder that, in modern times, there should be disputers by whom the evidence of Christianity is impugned, and its claims are rejected. The corrupt passions of mankind account for their opposition. "Men hate the light, because their deeds are evil; and will not come to it, lest they should be reproved." Licentiousness wishes to be free from restraint; and pride of understanding will not acknowledge the deficiency of its own resources, and submit to the dictates of superior wisdom. Was it ever found that a truly virtuous and humble man was an infidel? Does infidelity abound among persons of this character, the devout, the pure, the modest, and dispassionate inquirers after truth? Or are its advocates the profane and the dissipated, smatterers in knowledge, false pretenders to philosophy, and self-conceited speculatists, who, from the lofty eminence of genius and science on which they suppose themselves to be placed, look down with contempt upon the opinions and pursuits of the multitude?

I shall conclude this series of lectures upon revelation and its records, by briefly considering some of the objections which have been advanced against them.

The first objection is against any revelation at all; and proceeds upon the ground, that it is unnecessary, because reason is a sufficient guide in religion. A revelation reflects upon the wisdom of the Creator of man, as if he had not at first duly fitted him for the end of his being, and therefore found it expedient afterwards to supply the defect. We answered this objection by anticipation, when we showed, in a former lecture, the inadequacy of reason in matters of religion. It appeared, that unassisted reason has never attained to the knowledge of the true God, been able to construct a perfect rule of duty, and establish beyond doubt the

doctrine of a future state. In whatever manner it is accounted for, the fact is undeniable. Nothing is more absurd than to wrangle about the sufficiency of reason, although it has proved insufficient in every trial; and to engage in a formal refutation of the claim, would be as great a waste of time, as to prove by arguments that the sun does not shine at midnight, were it not expedient to guard those who are ignorant of the history of mankind against being imposed upon by bold, but false affirmations. Show us, I will not say a nation, but an individual, who, unaided in his researches, discovered the truth in the particulars mentioned, and we will acknowledge, at least, that reason was sufficient to him. If it shall be asked, How can this be, since reason is the gift of God? I am not obliged to answer that question; it is enough that I prove that it is not sufficient. If the infidel shall choose to lay the blame upon his Maker, of having bestowed an imperfect gift upon man, let him do so, and abide the consequence of his blasphemy. The fact is a stubborn one, and no speculation can set it aside. To us, there is no difficulty in accounting for it. We believe, that reason, when first conferred, was fully adequate to all the purposes which it was intended to serve; but that it has since been impaired and perverted by sin, which has both darkened the understanding and corrupted the heart; so that it is now led astray by the imagination and the passions, adopts false principles, and draws erroneous conclusions. Let it not be said that the depravity of reason is only a doctrine of revelation, which it has assumed to justify its own pretensions. The history of mankind vouches for its truth; for, what is it, but a history of the grossest absurdities, so far as religion is concerned? To say, then, that a revelation was unnecessary, because men possessed, from nature, the means of making all useful discoveries, is to contradict the most ample evidence furnished by the prevalence of idolatry, superstition, and immorality in all ages and nations. Either, then, truth on these points was not an object of importance, or a revelation was desirable, and there was no improbability against it. The strength of the argument is increased, when we consider that if human nature is depraved, as the errors of reason abundantly show, even although it had succeeded in discovering all the articles of natural religion, it would not have been a competent guide, because the new circumstances of man required the knowledge of new truths, which lay beyond the range of its inquiries. Reason could give us no information respecting the means of recovering our innocence, and regaining the favour of our Maker, any more than the knowledge of all that is necessary to us in health, would direct us to the remedies which are wanted in disease and sickness. This was an occasion which called for the interference of superior wisdom, or for the interference of the Creator, who alone could tell by what expedient we might be restored to our original state. Unless, then, it be denied that man is a sinner—and with those who controvert so plain a fact it is in vain to reason—and unless it be denied that more knowledge was necessary to us when fallen, than sufficed us when innocent, it must be admitted, that a revelation was necessary to revive our hopes, and to direct us into the way which leads to peace and felicity. If men were ignorant and exposed to perdition, it surely was not unworthy of God to supply the instruction which would extricate them from that deplorable condition.

The second objection is directed against the revelation in the Scriptures, and is founded on its partial diffusion. If it was necessary, why has it not been granted to all? Can we believe that to be a gift of the universal Parent, which only a few of his children are permitted to enjoy? shall we ascribe favouritism to a Being of infinite benevolence? The objection applies to the Christian, but with greater force to the Jewish revelation. Here is a nation inferior in many respects to other nations, which is said to have been selected by God to be his peculiar people, and on which he conferred peculiar privileges; while the rest of the human race were left to wander in the mazes of ignorance and sin. Let us state a similar case. Here is a nation without any peculiar merit, which enjoys all the advantages of a fine climate, and a fertile soil, and all the blessings of civilization; while there are many others in a half barbarous state, inhabiting barren regions, and struggling with inclement seasons. Again, here are a few individuals adorned with genius and taste, so as to seem to be beings of a superior order, when compared with multitudes who rank low in the scale of intellect, and are as children in comparison of them. Unless, on the ground of these differences, you are prepared to deny a Providence, which rules over all, I do not see that you can deny a revelation because it was once confined to a single people, and is still known only to a portion of mankind. To reason from the goodness of God, that it will be dispensed in equal shares to all men, is found to be false in experience, and must be false also in theory; that is, to infer *a priori*, that if a revelation were made, it would be communicated to all nations, is contrary to the analogy of providence, which gives to one, and withholds from another. Men forget themselves, when they seriously bring forward the present objection. Does it belong to them to prescribe to the Almighty the mode of his providence? or have they a right to demand that a free gift shall be alike imparted to all? We could not have claimed a revelation as our due, unless God had at first made man without the knowledge necessary for the fulfilment of the end of his being. But the revelation of the Scriptures supposes every individual to be guilty, and consequently to have forfeited any title to the favour of his Maker. Upon what ground, then, shall he complain, that a particular blessing has been withheld from him? or, upon what ground shall he say, It is impossible that God has bestowed a gift upon another, because he has not bestowed it upon me? This question is met by another, May not God do what he pleases with his own? You see, then, that there is no reason for rejecting the Jewish revelation, because it was confined to Judea; or the Christian, because it is not universal. If the nations of the world had forsaken the true God, were worshippers of idols, and practised innumerable abominations, he was not bound in justice to reclaim them. He did more than he was under any obligation to do, when he gave his statutes and judgments to one of them. The proofs of his mercy towards that nation, cannot be annihilated by the withholding of it from others. It never entered into the mind of any Israelite to deny that there was light in Goshen, because there was darkness over all the land of Egypt. What is the fact at present? Here is a religion said to have come from God, which is known to several nations. Is there any evidence of its divine origin? It is to this that we must look, and not to the accidental circumstance of its partial or universal propagation. This is not the test by which its claims should be tried. We must appeal to the evidence in its favour, if we would fairly decide the question; and finding it sufficient, we are bound to embrace the religion, whether its benefits have been extended to few or to many. Let a man acknowledge the virtue of the medicine which has cured him, although there should be thousands labouring under the same disease, to whom it has not been administered.

In the third place it is objected against revelation, that it contains mysteries and doctrines contrary to reason. What do you object to mysteries? Is it that they surpass our comprehension? Well, but you are not required to understand them. Have you any thing farther to say? Yes; it is absurd to suppose that a divine revelation would propose, as objects of belief, ar-

ticles of which we cannot form an adequate conception. They must be useless, as they are unintelligible. No; I answer, it by no means follows, that a fact is useless because I cannot explain it. There are many facts of this description upon which the business and the happiness of human life intimately depend. We know that a wound inflicted on the body causes pain, but we do not know how it affects the mind; and yet the simple fact excites us to use the precautions which are necessary to the preservation of life. In like manner, the mysteries of religion may have, and are proved to have, a powerful influence upon the devotion, the consolation, and the obedience of those who believe them. Nothing can be more unreasonable, than to object to mysteries in revelation, while they abound as much in natural religion; and it is so far from being true that religion ends where mystery begins, that all religion begins with mystery, and is accompanied by it throughout its whole progress. What is a more mysterious subject than God, a being without beginning, infinite but not extended, comprehending all things at a glance, upholding all things without perplexity, and infallibly accomplishing his purposes, yet leaving his creatures in possession of liberty? Is there, in fact, any thing which man thoroughly knows? A grain of sand or drop of water puzzles him. Why then does he expect that religion shall be free from mysteries? Is this a department in which all things must be plain? Why should every nook and crevice be illuminated here, while in every other province light is mingled with darkness? Is not the God of revelation the God of nature? and does it follow, that because he has been pleased to speak to us, all the secrets of his Essence shall be disclosed, and his transcendent Majesty shall be brought down to the level of our capacity? Might it not have been anticipated that as he was now to appear in a new character, and to carry on a new system of operations, new wonders would meet our eyes? The objection against revelation on account of its mysteries, is utterly contemptible; unless it could be shown that the doctrines referred to under this name, are contrary to reason. But it is one thing to assert, and another thing to prove. If a man should tell us, as Hume has done in his speculations on Cause and Effect, that for aught which we know, a feather might have created the universe; or should affirm with atheists, that the human race had no beginning, although each individual had a beginning; or should maintain that, although there are marks of design in the system of created things, it had not an intelligent author; we might justly pronounce his doctrines to be contrary to reason. But are there any doctrines in revelation which resemble these? We are often reminded of the Trinity, and clamorously told, that it is impossible to conceive a proposition more repugnant to our clearest ideas, than that the same Being should be one and three. This would unquestionably be true, if it were affirmed that he is one and three in the same sense; but let our adversaries demonstrate the impossibility of his being one in one sense, and three in another; one in essence, and three in personal distinctions. It is not so in men, they exclaim. We grant it; but does it follow that it is not so in God? Is nothing possible in an infinite, unless it exist in a finite essence? This is the logic of these mighty men of reason; but they should be sent to school again that they may learn not to draw conclusions which are not contained in the premises. The presumption would be ridiculous, were not a more serious emotion excited by the impiety of puny mortals who know not how a hair of the head grows, and yet take upon them to pronounce what can and cannot be, in that nature which fills heaven and earth.

In the fourth place objections are advanced against the scheme of redemption revealed in the Scriptures, as implying what is incredible and impossible. Infidels exclaim against the incarnation of our Saviour as absurd and impious; and say, Who can believe that man was God, and God man, that God was born, suffered, and died on a cross? Let us first state the doctrine accurately. We maintain that God became man by uniting himself with human nature in a mysterious manner; but we deny any confusion or mixture of the natures, which remained perfectly distinct; so that when we speak of the Son of God as having been born, and as having suffered and died, we refer exclusively to the assumed nature, of which alone such things are predicable, although we ascribe them to the person to whom that nature belongs. Now, to the doctrine thus cleared from misrepresentation, what objection can be made? Although such a union would have been previously improbable—and it is acknowledged that nothing could have been more remote from the ordinary train of human thought—this neither proves that it was impossible, nor can it invalidate the evidence that it has actually taken place. In any other case, a man would be laughed at who should obstinately withhold his assent to what was told him, on the ground that it was improbable, although it had been established by satisfactory evidence. The only ground which could justify him in disregarding evidence, would be the impossibility of the thing. But who will presume to say that this union of the divine and human nature was impossible? or rather, who will demonstrate that it was impossible? for we will not be content with assertion, but demand proof. Who can tell us what God can and cannot do? Who has explored all the resources of Omnipotence? God has conjoined in the composition of man two substances which have no common properties, and yet, as experience teaches us, operate together and upon each other. God exerts his power immediately upon his creatures, to uphold, assist, and excite them to act; for it is a dictate of reason as well as of revelation, that "in him we live, and move, and have our being." How is it proved that he must stop here? that he cannot form a more intimate alliance with his creatures? that it would be unworthy of him and contrary to the nature of things, to select a human being as the instrument of his agency for some great purpose, and with this view, to connect that being with himself by a peculiar and mysterious relation! This is the doctrine of the incarnation, and till we hear something more than clamours against it, we shall continue to believe it upon the general evidence that the Scriptures are true.

Again, infidels object against the method by which the incarnate Redeemer is said to have effected our salvation, namely, by his substitution. What is more inconsistent with justice, than that one person should suffer for another,—the innocent should bear the punishment of the guilty? Whatever force there may seem, at first sight, to be in this objection, it has been rejected by universal consent; for the idea of vicarious sufferings has prevailed in all ages and nations. Jews and Gentiles have believed that the Deity might be appeased, not only by the sufferings of the guilty themselves, but by the death of animals offered in their room; and hence sacrifices were an essential part of their religion. To whatever original source the idea may be traced, its universal diffusion is a proof that men did not consider it as incompatible with justice, that the penalty to which one individual was subject, should be inflicted on another. The idea is admitted still in all cases of suretiship, when one person is called to make good the engagements which another has failed to fulfil. It may be said that in such cases there cannot be injustice, because the surety, when he became responsible for another, was aware of the consequences, and according to the common saying, *volenti nulla fit injuria*. It is precisely on this ground that we vindicate the Scripture doctrine of the atonement of Christ. His sufferings were voluntary in the most perfect sense, the re-

sult of generous love to man, and of ardent zeal for the glory of his Father. It would be contrary to justice that the innocent should suffer for the guilty, if the sufferer was compelled to be the victim; if he were not master of his own life, and, however willing, had not a right to dispose of it; or if society would be injured by his death, and if the punishment would be complete and final loss to himself. But none of these things is applicable to the present case. First, Jesus Christ was a willing victim; and when the time of his sufferings was near, he "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."* Secondly, he was Lord of his own life; he had power to lay it down, and had power to take it again.† Thirdly, so far was his death from being injurious to society, that the greatest benefit has resulted to mankind from it, as the price of their eternal redemption. Lastly, his sufferings have terminated in unspeakable advantage to himself; for while he has accomplished the benevolent design on which he was so fully bent, he has obtained the highest felicity and glory, and reigns at the right hand of his Father, over heaven and earth. When we consider the ultimate end of his sufferings, the manifestation of the holiness of God, the maintenance of his authority, the restoration of his law, the advancement of the cause of righteousness, and the expulsion of sin and misery from his kingdom; the substitution appears to be an act worthy of the Supreme Governor of the universe, and in itself and its consequences, the most glorious part of his moral administration.

Once more, it is objected that if the Son of God assumed human nature, and died for the salvation of men, the end was disproportionate to the means. The dispensation would be unworthy of the wisdom of God; for it is incredible that such grand preparations should have been made for the sake of a race of beings so insignificant, that the destruction of them, and the earth which they inhabit, would not have caused a perceptible blank in the wide regions of creation. But such reasoning is fallacious. The universe itself is as nothing, yea, less than nothing, in the eyes of its Maker. Might we not then say, why does he take any concern in it? Why does he bestow attention on particular parts of it—for example, upon men—as we learn from experience that he does, in the dispensations of his providence? Why does he care for still more contemptible creatures, insects and animalcules, whom he brings into existence by his power, and sustains by his bounty? To reason from the greatness of God and the littleness of man, would lead to conclusions which we know to be false. The proper question, therefore, in the present case is, not what in our apprehension did it become God to do, but what has he actually done? But we may give the argument a different shape. You say that man was not worthy of all this care, which is implied in redemption. But consider distinctly what was its object. It was to deliver millions of human beings from perdition, and to raise them to a state of consummate and interminable bliss. Was this an insignificant object? Can any person estimate the value of one soul, when viewed in connexion with eternity? And what is the value of myriads of souls? Although the salvation of men had been the sole object of redemption, we must have pronounced it to be worthy of the benevolence of the Deity, and to be a noble display of wisdom and goodness. But are we sure that this was the only design? Is there no reason to think that it is a part of a great moral scheme, and that its effects extend to the whole intelligent creation? Was it not intended to be a manifestation of the character and perfections of the Deity, by which he would be exalted in the eyes of all orders of rational beings, the authority of his law would be more solemnly established, the obedient would be confirmed in their allegiance, and their felicity would be augmented. Taken in this connexion, our little world, and insignificant race, acquire an importance which, viewed in themselves, they did not possess. Man has been made the object of this wonderful dispensation, not for his own sake only, but for the good of the whole family dispersed among the countless worlds which roll in the immensity of space; and the earth is the chosen theatre for the display of the glories of the Godhead. The spot is nothing, the display is everything; but surely a more proper scene could not have been devised, than the habitation of beings as mean as they were vile; in whose salvation there would be an impressive manifestation of the unsearchable riches of the love and grace of the Most High. This is the centre from which rays diverge in every direction throughout the universe, to illuminate and gladden the myriads who people its numerous provinces. The hour of our redemption is the most memorable era in its history, the commencement of a new order of things which will last for ever.

In the fifth place, infidels object to many of the facts related in the Scriptures, as absurd and impossible. The story of the temptation of our first parents, has afforded an abundant subject of ridicule, because the agent was a serpent, and the sin consisted in eating an apple. With regard to the sin, in a moral estimate, the matter of it is of little account; it is the disposition which is to be considered. The action may be trifling in itself; but it assumes another character when it proceeds from resistance to lawful authority. Those who cannot make this distinction, are unfit to be reasoned with. The agent was a serpent, but not the dumb irrational reptile alone; for we learn from other places, that it was merely the instrument of a malignant being, who was permitted to utter articulate sounds through its mouth, for the trial of the primitive pair. It would require more knowledge of the invisible world than infidels possess, in order to prove that this was impossible. The story of Balaam's ass has been also held up to ridicule; but most unjustly. We do not suppose that the animal had the power of speech, and understood the sounds which it uttered, but merely that it was enabled to express a few words for a particular purpose; and all objections should be silenced by the statement, that "the Lord opened its mouth,"* for none but an atheist will deny that this could be done by omnipotence. He who made man's mouth could make other creatures to speak like men; and we know that some irrational creatures are taught by human art to pronounce words, without understanding them. The history of the deluge has been assailed by many objections, although our earth exhibits every where proofs that it has suffered a dreadful convulsion, in which water was the agent. If it be asked, where water could be found in such quantity as to cover the whole surface of the globe? I cannot tell; but does it follow, that he who made the sea and the dry land could not provide it? If it be asked, how the various kinds of animals could be brought together from their distant abodes into one place? I can see no difficulty in believing the fact, since they are always under the control and direction of the Author of their instincts. If it be asked, how they could all be contained in the ark? I answer, that it has been proved, by accurate calculation, to have afforded ample space for them, and for food to sustain them during the time of the confinement. If it be asked, how such an unwieldy body could be prevented from oversetting in the waters, and being overwhelmed by the fury of waves and currents? It is enough to know, that it was under the protection of Providence. The miracle recorded in Joshua, where the sun and moon are said to have stood still, has been pronounced to be impossible according to the constitu-

* Luke ix. 51. † John x. 18.

* Num. xxii. 28.

tion of nature. It is pitiful to say that the sun could not stand still because it does not move; for the history speaks according to the ideas of the age, and was intended to record simply the appearance to the eye, to which the language of men, whether philosophers or peasants, is still conformed in common conversation. Whether the effect was produced by a supernatural refraction, or whether the motion of the earth around its axis was suspended, we do not possess the means of determining. In either case there was a miracle; and both were alike easy to Omnipotence. He who gave law to nature could stop its course without the slightest injury to the system. I shall take notice, in the last place, of the fate of Jonah, who was three days in the belly or stomach of a whale, or rather a great fish, for the word is general, and does not inform us of the species. To account for the fact upon natural principles, it has been stated, that a living substance is not acted upon by the juices of the stomach, and that persons in whom the *foramen ovale* remains open can live without breathing for a considerable time. But although these things were true, for what purpose are they resorted to? Is it to prove that what has been accounted a miracle was an event, uncommon indeed, but not supernatural? There is no occasion to summon God's own laws to his assistance; for no person, who believes that he is omnipotent, can doubt that he could have preserved Jonah in his perilous situation. Nothing is more absurd than to object to a miracle on account of its difficulty; for in doing so, we set limits to the power of God, and assimilate it to the power of man, which succeeds in some cases and fails in others. God could as easily make us live in water or in fire, as in air, because, being the sole Author of life, he could support it without means, or in opposition to the natural causes of its destruction. If an alleged miracle is not physically impossible, its greatness does not in any degree diminish its credibility; and all that concerns us is to ascertain that it is fully attested.

In the sixth place, infidels object, that some things in the Scriptures are unworthy of God, and reflect upon the excellence of his nature, the purity of his character, and the wisdom of his procedure. The Scriptures, it is said, give us false ideas of God, while they represent him as a corporeal being, who has eyes, ears, hands and feet, and attribute to him human infirmities and passions, as hope, fear, grief, repentance, &c. But the man who seriously advances this objection must be strangely deficient in candour, if his reading has not been confined to the few passages with which he is dissatisfied. There is no book which is so careful to admonish us against supposing that God bears any resemblance to his creatures, and gives such sublime descriptions of him as infinite, independent, immutable, and possessed of every possible perfection. "To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One."* Such passages are an effectual antidote to those in which he is spoken of after the manner of men, to assist our feeble conceptions, and to impress abstract truths more strongly upon our minds, through the medium of the imagination and the senses. If he has an arm, it is an arm which sustains all nature; if he has eyes, they are eyes which survey the universe at a glance, and see in the dark; if he has ears, they hear the thoughts and desires of the heart. With respect to his hope and fear, his sorrow and repentance, the abuse of these attributions is guarded against by the explicit declaration, that "all his works are known to him from the beginning of the world," and that he "works all things according to the counsel of his will," or that he foresees every thing, and every thing is in unison with his eternal decrees. It is objected again, that the Scriptures make God the author of sin, by representing him as tempting men, hardening their hearts, and putting it into their minds to do evil. But justice requires, that, if possible, we should explain a book consistently with itself; and when we find the Scriptures affirming that God is a being of unspotted purity, that he holds sin in abhorrence, and the great end of the dispensations of providence and grace is to reclaim men from it, are we not bound to put a favourable construction upon expressions which seem to be of a contrary import? Viewed in their connexion, they can only mean that God did not interpose to change the dispositions of the persons referred to; that he left them to themselves; and that the circumstances in which they were placed had a tendency to elicit their depravity, and to confirm their criminal purposes. Farther, the morality of some commands which issued from God has been impeached; and they have been accused of sanctioning cruelty, injustice, and fraud. Among the number is the command to Abraham to offer up Isaac. Can it be believed that the Deity would require a human sacrifice? We may say, that God had no design to accept such a sacrifice, and that nothing more was intended than to make trial of the faith of the patriarch, and furnish a noble example of obedience to succeeding generations. But if Isaac had been slain, would any injustice have been done? Not surely to Isaac, whose life was forfeited by sin, like that of all other men, and might be taken from him in this way, as well as by disease. It would have been painful to his father to be the agent; but the right of the supreme Governor to prescribe any service to his subjects is indisputable; and in obeying him they can do no wrong. What shall be said of the command to exterminate the nations of Canaan, which seems rather to have proceeded from the demon of destruction, than from the merciful Governor of mankind? Let the case be stated as it was. These nations were impious and profligate in a more than ordinary degree; and will it be doubted, that if the divine government is moral, they deserved to be punished? Had God employed an earthquake to bury them under the ruins of their dwellings, would any man have thought that he had dealt unjustly with them? There seems no more injustice in rooting them out by the sword of the Israelites; and there was a fitness in making them the instruments, because, having witnessed the sufferings of the Canaanites, and knowing the cause of them, they would be more effectually restrained from imitating their abominable practices. The command to the Israelites to spoil the Egyptians is justified on these grounds; that the Sovereign Proprietor has a right to transfer the property of one person to another, and that the present was an instance of just retribution, because the Israelites had long laboured for the good of the Egyptians, but had been cruelly oppressed, and defrauded of their due. The means are objected to, because, to borrow implies a promise to restore, while it is certain that the Israelites had no such intention. But this difficulty exists only in our translation; for the original says, that they were commanded to *ask* jewels of gold and silver, and raiment from their neighbours; and to account for the success of a simple request, it is stated, that "the Lord gave the people favour in the eyes of the Egyptians."*

Our limits permit me to take notice only of a few objections of this kind as a specimen. Passing, therefore, many which have been advanced, I shall mention only other two, which are founded on the history of the Israelites. The idea that they were a peculiar people is rejected as implying partiality in the Deity, and establishing a system of favouritism on the ruins of universal benevolence. This objection will deserve an answer when it is proved that creatures have a claim upon their Creator, and that he is bound to treat them all upon equal terms. But we shall look for such proof

* Isa. xl. 25.

* Exod. xii. 36.

in vain, and the whole history of providence is opposed to it; for as individuals enjoy different degrees of understanding, health, and riches, so nations are at present, and have always been, differently situated in respect of soil, climate, civilization, and, in short, in respect of both physical and moral advantages. The peculiar privileges enjoyed by the Israelites include something of greater importance, namely, the exclusive possession of divine revelation; but if God did not owe a revelation to mankind, there was no injustice in giving it to one people, and withholding it from others. The law which was enjoined upon this select people has been boldly condemned as unworthy of the wisdom and goodness of God. Its precepts have been called trifling, unmeaning, vexatious; calculated only to foster superstition, and to substitute external observances for purity of heart. A vindication of the ceremonial law, against which these charges are chiefly directed, would lead to a lengthened discussion. We should always remember, that it was not the only law delivered to the Israelites, but was accompanied with the moral law, which was summed up in the two precepts of love to God and love to our neighbour, and reminded them that piety and holiness constituted the essence of religion. This being the case, whatever might be the effect upon individuals of the constitution under which they were placed, its native tendency was, not to cherish superstition, but to inspire noble sentiments and holy dispositions. It is impossible for us, who live at such a distance of time and are imperfectly acquainted with the state of things in that age, to account for every precept; but, from some particulars which have come to our knowledge, we may conclude, that all the precepts were wise and necessary, as preservatives from the customs of the idolatrous nations with which the Israelites were surrounded. In judging of a law, fairness requires that we should consider its design. Now, we know that the ceremonial law was not intended merely to regulate the conduct of the Israelites in matters of religion, but had a reference to another dispensation, the great events of which it prefigured. In this connexion it should be viewed, and then many of its institutions, of which a satisfactory account could not be otherwise given, will appear to have been framed with consummate wisdom, in order to direct their thoughts to the events of futurity, and likewise to furnish, in the exact fulfilment of its types, a new proof of its own divinity, as well as an evidence of the truth of Christianity, in which it received its accomplishment. The wisdom of God is illustrated by the harmony of the law and the gospel.

In the last place, the supposed contradictions in the Scriptures furnish a ground of objection: for it is said, How can a book be true which asserts one thing in one place, and a different thing in another? And above all, how can it have proceeded from Him who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" It is not enough to answer, that these discrepancies do not affect the general truth of our religion, because a testimony may be substantially true although the witnesses do not agree in some subordinate points. Contradiction in minute matters is inconsistent with the idea of inspiration; and, instead of evading the objection, we must endeavour to meet it, if we would maintain the divine authority of the record.

In some cases, the contradiction is only apparent, and is removed by an explanation of the passages. When Solomon says, "answer not a fool according to to his folly;" and again, "answer a fool according to his folly;"* the reasons subjoined to these injunctions show us that he viewed the case in different lights, and intimate that what would be proper at one time, would be improper at another. If "the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent," and it is affirmed that he repented having set Saul king over Israel,* there is no real opposition in these two statements. God does not repent in the sense of changing his counsels, but he repents in the sense of changing his dispensations; for, like a man who has altered his design, he reversed what he had formerly done. The apostle James seems to be at variance with Moses, because the one says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God," and the other tells us that the Lord "did tempt Abraham;"† but the difficulty is removed by the simple observation, that James means by tempting, soliciting to sin, while Moses means, making trial of faith and obedience.

It is acknowledged that there are some contradictions which it is impossible to reconcile; but as they may be accounted for by a false reading, candour requires that we should admit this solution; and, in some cases, it is absolutely necessary that we should, because the error is such, that it could not be committed by the original writer. For example, we read that Ahaziah was forty and two years old when he began to reign, although, in the preceding chapter, we are told that his father died at the age of forty, and besides, he was his youngest son. No man in his senses would thus contradict himself, and assert an absolute impossibility; and we therefore believe that the proper reading is twenty-two, as we find it in another book.‡ In the same way we explain the different accounts of the age of Jehoiachin at the commencement of his reign, who is said, in Kings, to have been eighteen, and in Chronicles, to have been eight.‖ From the same cause, too, Solomon is represented, in one place, as having forty thousand stalls for horses, and in another place, as having only four thousand.§ In a book so ancient as the Old Testament, and which has been so often transcribed, it is not surprising that some mistakes should have been committed; and without a miracle, they could not have been prevented. This is not a mere supposition, but a fact clearly established, by the collections which learned men have made of various readings; and there is no case, in which a transcriber was more liable to err than in numbers, especially if they were expressed not by words, but by letters or arbitrary marks.

The following general remarks are applicable to historical and chronological difficulties, and may be successfully employed in many cases to remove them; "that in the Scriptures, as well as in other histories, the order of time is not always strictly observed; that the same persons and places have sometimes different names; and in the case of years and numbers of any kind, round numbers are used, or an even number is put for another, which was in a small degree deficient or redundant; that periods of time, as for example, the reigns of kings, have different dates, a king being reckoned to have commenced his reign, either at the death of his predecessor, or when he was associated with him in the government; that an event, from its similarity to another, is supposed to be the same, may be different, and is therefore related with some difference of circumstances; and that there may be an apparent discrepance in the relation of the same transaction by two or more writers, because one omits some particulars which have been mentioned by another, or adds particulars of which another has taken no notice."¶

By referring to different dates, we account for the difference in the number of years. When it is said, in one place, that Abraham's seed should be, for four hundred years, strangers in a land which was not theirs,

* Prov. xxvi. 4, 5.

* 1 Sam. xv. 11. 29. † James. i. 13. Gen. xxii. 1.
‡ 2 Chron. xxii. 2. 2 Kings viii. 26.
‖ 2 Kings xxiv. 8. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9.
§ 1 Kings iv. 26. 2 Chron. ix. 25.
¶ Essay on Inspiration, p. 297.

and in another, that they were delivered from Egypt at the expiration of four hundred and thirty years; * the date, in the first, is from the birth of Isaac; and in the second, from the call of the patriarch. I shall produce one instance of seeming contradiction, arising from a disregard of the order of time. According to John, Christ was anointed at Bethany six days before the passover, but Matthew does not speak of it till within two days of the feast.† It was then that Judas offered to betray his Master; and in relating his treachery, Matthew recollected the event which compelled him to consummate his design, the rebuke which he received from Christ some days before, when he complained of the waste of the ointment.

It is impossible to do more than to give you a specimen of the modes of reconciling different passages. The subject is extensive, and you must be referred to the authors who have treated it at length. The two genealogies of Christ are so widely different, that there is no way of accounting for them, but by the supposition, that Matthew gives his descent from David, in the line of Joseph, his reputed father; and Luke, his descent in the line of Mary his mother.‡ Jesus, says Luke, was about thirty years of age, being ὡς ἐνομίζετο, not really, but *as was supposed*, the son of Joseph, whose true father was Jacob, but he is here called the son of Heli, because he was his son-in-law, being married to Mary his daughter. The different accounts of the superscription on the cross may be reconciled by the circumstance, that it was written in different languages; whence one of the evangelists has given it from the Hebrew, another from the Greek, and another from the Latin. "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews;" "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews;" "This is the king of the Jews."‖ In like manner, with regard to the exclamation of the centurion, who said, according to Matthew, "Truly this was the Son of God;" but, according to Luke, "Certainly this was a righteous man:"§ both accounts may be true, for he may have uttered both sentences, although each of these evangelists has chosen to give only one of them.

No wise man will be surprised that we meet with difficulties in revelation; nor will they have any undue effect upon an honest mind. They certainly call for investigation, but no greater importance should be attached to them than they really possess. We should pronounce that man to be a fool, who, having complete evidence of a fact presented to him, should continue to entertain doubts of it because there were some things connected with it which he was unable to explain. In cases of this kind, our judgment should be determined by the preponderance of the evidence. If the arguments for the conclusion are superior to the arguments against it, we do not act rationally, but absurdly, when we withhold our assent. It must be a weak or a prejudiced mind which is influenced by some objections to reject Christianity, notwithstanding the abundant evidence by which its claims are established; and we have reason to suspect, that the heart is in fault still more than the head, and that in this case, men hate the light because their deeds are evil.

LECTURE XI.

INSPIRATION OF THE SACRED WRITERS.

Inspiration claimed by the Writers of Scripture—Different Opinions respecting it—Plenary Inspiration—Degrees of Inspiration according to the Jews; According to Christian Divines: Superintendence, Elevation, Suggestion—Account of the different Degrees of Inspiration—In what Sense the Scriptures are the Word of God—Did Inspiration extend to the Language?—Character of Persons inspired; Modes of Inspiration—Privilege of Moses.

I HAVE endeavoured, in the preceding lectures, to prove the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures; that they were written by the persons to whom they are ascribed, and that their contents are worthy of credit. These two points are sufficient to establish the truth of our religion. It is not absolutely necessary to inquire, whether the sacred writers were supernaturally qualified for composing the records of revelation; because if their veracity and competence are ascertained, the facts which they attest furnish satisfactory evidence of the divine origin of Christianity. But however fully we might be convinced of the general truth of our religion, when we proceed to examine its nature, to investigate its doctrines, precepts, institutions, and promises, we could not have perfect confidence in the detailed account, although we should entertain no suspicion of the honesty of the writers, unless we had reason to believe that they were assisted in drawing it up, so as to commit no mistakes either in narrating or in reasoning, and to leave out nothing which was essential to the system. Our confidence would be the less, when, not to mention the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, which persons of the greatest talents must have felt, to avoid all error in an account so complicated, and embracing so great a variety of matter, we reflect that the sacred writers were men without education, unskilled in composition, and consequently inadequate to the task. It might have almost been assumed, *a priori*, that if God was pleased to give a revelation to the world, he would not expose it to the hazard of being misrepresented, corrupted, and mutilated, through the infirmity of those who should undertake to transmit it to succeeding generations; and that, by a continuation of the miraculous agency which a revelation implies, he would so influence their minds, that those who lived at a distance in respect of time and place, should have the same advantages for exactly knowing its contents, as they had to whom it was primarily delivered. And surely, to those who admit that miracles are wrought to attest revelation, it will not seem incredible that there should have been one miracle more, so obviously necessary, as the inspiration of the persons by whom it was committed to writing. The possibility of inspiration none but an atheist will deny; and it would be strange indeed if its probability should be called in question by any who bear the Christian name, while they are compelled to admit the fact in the case of the prophets.

It is not, however, by reasoning, the solidity of which might be disputed, that we prove the inspiration of the Scriptures. We appeal to their own testimony, and might produce many passages in which it is explicitly asserted, or plainly implied. I shall quote the words of Paul, in the second Epistle to Timothy, because whatever attempt some critics have made to evade their force, they convey distinct information to those who are candidly disposed to receive it: "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."* I acknowledge that the apostle must be understood to speak only of the Jewish Scriptures, which Timothy had known from his childhood, for when he was a child no part of the Christian Scriptures had been published; but if the inspiration of the former is established, that of the latter will be readily conceded. It has been affirmed that the verse should be rendered thus—"Every writing divinely inspired is profitable;" and it is thus converted into a general proposition, which does not vouch for the inspiration of any particu-

* Gen. xv. 13. Exod. xii. 40.
† John xii. 1. 3. Matt. xxvi. 2. 7.
‡ Matt. i. Luke iii. 23, et seq.
‖ Matt. xxvii. 37. John xix. 19. Luke. xxiii. 38.
§ Matt. xxvii. 54. Luke xxiii. 47.

* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

lar book, and leaves the question undecided, what books are inspired. This makes it a proposition which communicates no specific information, and is as superfluous as it would be to tell us that the sun gives light. It would have never entered into the mind of any man to suppose that a book really inspired was of no use. But although we should admit the translation, it goes farther than its authors intended; for while it was their design to destroy the evidence arising from the words, in behalf of the inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures, they still bear explicit testimony to it. The apostle had mentioned them in the preceding verse, and he now adds, "every inspired writing is profitable," evidently assigning the reason why these Scriptures were able to make Timothy wise unto salvation. It was their inspiration which made them profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. We can conceive no reason for the mention of inspired writings in this connexion, but to attest the inspiration of the books of the Old Testament. Thus the translation turns out an abortive attempt to weaken or overthrow the authority of the Jewish canon. That it is a mistranslation, every person will see on consulting the original, πασα γραφη θεοπνευστος και ωφελιμος.* The conjunction και,† which connects θεοπνευστος‡ and ωφελιμος,‖ clearly shows that both adjectives belong to the predicate of the proposition, and that πασα γραφη§ alone is the subject. No example can be produced where two adjectives are thus joined, of which the one belongs to the subject, and the other to the predicate. Had Paul meant to express the idea which these critics attach to his words, he would have left out the conjunction, or perhaps have substituted the verb of existence, εστι, as a copulative. Πασα γραφη θεοπνευστος ωφελιμος, ὁτ, πασα γραφη θεοπνευστος εστιν ωφελιμος. This, then, is the proper translation, *every writing is divinely inspired, and is profitable;* that is, every one of the writings referred to in the preceding verse, under the designation of the Holy Scriptures; and thus he asserts the inspiration of all the books contained in the sacred volume of the Jews.

There are many other passages in which the inspiration of the Old Testament is asserted or implied. The books are called the "oracles of God,"¶ by which designation they are plainly referred to a divine origin, and distinguished from human compositions. They are frequently quoted under the name of Scripture, *the writing* by way of eminence; that is, the inspired writing, according to the words of Paul, which have been considered. Our Saviour appealed to them as containing the words of eternal life, and bearing testimony to him;** and gave his sanction to them all, as arranged by the Jews in the three divisions of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms.†† When we look into the Old Testament itself, we find the claim of inspiration repeatedly and explicitly advanced. Moses affirms that he wrote part, at least, of the Pentateuch by the command of God;‡‡ David tells us, that "the Spirit of the Lord spake by him, and his word was in his tongue,"‖‖ and all the prophets delivered their messages in the name of Jehovah.

There are many particulars from which the same conclusion may be drawn, with respect to the books of the New Testament. It is evident that the writers were not left to their own unassisted faculties, from the promise of our Saviour, that the Father would send the Spirit in his name, "who should teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever he had said unto them."§§ "Howbeit," he adds, "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come."* He likewise admonished them, when they were brought before magistrates and councils for his sake, to "take no thought what they should say, because it would be given them in that hour what they should speak;"† that is, proper sentiments and words would be suggested to them. We do not surely overstrain these promises, when we infer from them that they enjoyed the same supernatural assistance in composing their narrations and epistles; in which it was at least equally necessary, as these were to be the rule of faith and practice to the church in all ages. Accordingly, they did claim inspiration, not only by placing their own writings on a level with those of the prophets, but by many express declarations. Thus Paul tells us, in the name of his brethren, that they have received the Spirit of God, that they might know the things which were freely given them of God; "which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."‡ With respect to himself, he affirms that he had "the mind of Christ:"‖ that the things which he wrote were the commandments of the Lord;"§ that the gospel which he preached, he had received "by the revelation of Jesus Christ;"¶ and that whosoever despised the things which he and his brethren taught, despised not man but God, who had given to them the Holy Ghost.** John speaks thus of all the apostles: "We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."†† You observe that some of the passages now quoted refer directly to their writings, and that in them all it is assumed, that the apostles were supernaturally assisted in communicating the gospel to mankind, and consequently in committing it to writing as well as in preaching it.

On the ground of these declarations, it has been generally admitted, that there is a specific difference between the sacred books and human compositions. Their inspiration has been generally acknowledged; but the question, how far it extends, has given rise to a diversity of opinions. Some have had the boldness to deny it altogether; and some have circumscribed it within very narrow limits. "I think," says Dr. Priestley, "that the Scriptures were written without any particular inspiration, by men who wrote according to the best of their knowledge, and who, from their circumstances, could not be mistaken with respect to the greater facts, of which they were proper witnesses, but like other men subject to prejudice, might be liable to adopt a hasty and ill-grounded opinion, concerning things which did not fall within the compass of their own knowledge, and which had no connexion with any thing that was so." It must strike you at once, that this is a direct contradiction of the sacred writers, and an impeachment of their veracity; and if they have told us a falsehood, when they asserted their inspiration, how can we give credit to them in any other thing? If they were all deceived on this point by imagination, they were incompetent witnesses; and if they were not deceived, they have forfeited all title to our confidence. Dr. Priestley found it necessary to destroy the authority of the record, that he might pave the way for establishing his own system, from which all the peculiar doctrines of Christianity are excluded, and might be at liberty to believe as much or as little as he pleased. It is strange to suppose a revelation to have been given so full of misstatements, and false reasonings, that in order to discover what is true and what is false we must

* All scripture (is) divinely inspired and (is) profitable.
† And. ‡ Divinely inspired.
‖ Profitable. § Every writing.
¶ Acts vii. 38. Rom. iii. 2. Heb. v. 12. 1 Pet. iv. 11.
** John v. 39. †† Luke xxiv. 44. ‡‡ Deut. xxxi. 19. 22.
‖‖ 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. §§ John xiv. 26.

* John xvi. 13. † Matt. x. 19. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 13.
‖ Ibid. 16. § 1 Cor. xiv. 37. ¶ Gal. i. 12.
** 1 Thess. iv. 8. †† 1 John iv. 6.

end where we began, by making reason the supreme judge in religion. Others have maintained, that the inspiration of the apostles was only occasional; that they were not always assisted and guided by the Holy Spirit; and that consequently, being sometimes left to themselves, they thought and reasoned like ordinary men. As this is a mere hypothesis, unsupported by proof, it is entitled to very little attention. If admitted, it would involve us in the greatest perplexity, because, not knowing when they did, and when they did not, enjoy the presence of the Spirit, we should be utterly at a loss to determine what parts of their writings we ought to believe. There would be truth, and there might be error in them; but how to distinguish and separate them, would puzzle the wisest head. And it comes to the same thing at last, whether you say, that they were not inspired at all, or that they were inspired on certain occasions, while you do not furnish us with the means of ascertaining those occasions. Once more, it has been affirmed, "that the whole scheme of the gospel was supernaturally revealed to the apostles, was faithfully retained in their memories, and is expounded in their writings by the use of their natural faculties." I do not thoroughly understand this theory, because it does not distinctly explain how much is assigned to inspiration, and how much to the persons inspired; but, if it is meant, that after the revelation was made to them, they had the same power over it as a man has over his own thoughts, and were at the same liberty with respect to the mode of communicating it as we are with respect to the suggestions of our own minds, I consider it as inconsistent with the scriptural idea of inspiration, and with the statement, that "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."*

Many learned men have held the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, which imports, that every part of them is inspired. The doctrine has met with violent opposition, and has been treated with ridicule; but the objections against it have arisen, in some cases at least, I apprehend, from misconception. It has been supposed to imply, that every part of the sacred books was immediately communicated to the minds of the writers; and as some parts of them relate to common things, to things which might have been known from other sources, it seemed absurd to introduce a revelation, where the bodily senses and natural reason were fully adequate to the purpose. But this is not the true idea of plenary inspiration. It extends, indeed, to the whole Scriptures; but it admits of degrees suited to the nature of the subject which the writers were employed to record, and did not supersede the use of their natural faculties, so far as these could contribute to the general design. The whole was not a revelation in the strict acceptation of the term, but the whole was committed to writing by the direction and with the assistance of the Spirit.

Inspiration may be defined to be, "an influence of the Holy Spirit upon the understandings, imaginations, memories, and other mental powers of the sacred writers, by which they were qualified to communicate to the world the knowledge of the will of God."† The definition is designedly made general, that it may comprehend the different degrees of inspiration, which will be afterwards mentioned; and it is so expressed as to suit the highest and the lowest. The possibility of such an influence will be admitted by every person who believes that God is the former of our souls, and the master of our faculties; and the necessity of it is evident, if human agents were to be employed in giving instruction to their brethren on the high and important subject of religion.

The Jews make mention of three degrees of inspiration, to which they refer the several books of the Old Testament according to their fancy. The first and highest they attribute to Moses, with whom "God spake mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark similitudes." The second, they call the gift of prophecy, of which they imagine various subordinate degrees, corresponding to the different methods in which God revealed himself to the prophets. The last and lowest is the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, from which proceeded those books that are called the holy writings. Were it worth while to examine this division, and the classification of the books founded upon it, it would be easy to show that it is altogether arbitrary, and discovers the folly and stupidity of its authors. Of books which bear precisely the same character, some are ascribed to the gift of prophecy, and others, without reason, to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. "It would be idle," says Dr. Grey,* "to trouble the reader with the discussion of these rabbinical conceits; and it may be sufficient here to remark upon this subject, that though the Scripture mentions different modes by which God communicated his instructions to the prophets, and particularly attributes a superior degree of eminence to Moses, yet that these differences, and this distinction, however they may affect the dignity of the minister employed, cannot be supposed to increase or to lessen the certainty of the things imparted. Whatever God condescended to communicate to mankind by his servants must be equally infallible and true, whether derived from immediate converse with him, from an external voice, or from dreams or visions, or lastly, from the internal and enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit. The mode of communication, where the agency of Providence is established, can in no respect exalt or depreciate the intrinsic character of the thing revealed."

These observations are applicable to the different degrees of inspiration, which have been stated by Christian authors; for all agree that it was not enjoyed in the same degree by all the sacred writers. The three degrees of inspiration which are usually mentioned, are superintendence, elevation, and suggestion. Superintendence signifies the care exercised over those who related things which they knew by ordinary means, and by which they were preserved from the possibility of error. Elevation prevailed, says Dr. Doddridge,† "when the faculties, though they acted in a regular and common manner, were elevated or raised to some extraordinary degree, so that the composition was more truly sublime, noble, and pathetic, than what would have been produced merely by the force of a man's natural genius." Suggestion is "the highest kind of inspiration, and took place, when the use of the faculties was superseded, and God as it were spoke directly to the mind; making such discoveries to it as it could not otherwise have obtained, and dictating the very words in which these discoveries were to be communicated to others. But although this distinction is very generally adopted, I think it liable to material objections, which will be stated in the sequel.

As I have nothing to say on the kinds or degrees of inspiration different from what I long since gave to the public,‡ I shall content myself with repeating my former observations on the subject.

First, there are many things in the Scriptures which the writers might have known, and probably did know, by ordinary means. As persons possessed of memory, judgment, and the other intellectual faculties which are common to men, they were able to relate events in which they had been concerned, and to make such occasional reflections as were suggested by particular sub-

* 2 Pet. i. 21. † Dick's Essay on Insp. chap. i. p. 21.

* Key to the Old Testament and Apocrypha. Introduction, p. 10.

† Doddridge's Diss. on the Inspiration of the New Testament.

‡ Essay on Insp. chap. i. The nine following paragraphs are taken from the same chapter.

jects and occurrences. In these cases, no supernatural influence was necessary to enlighten and invigorate their minds: it was only necessary that they should be infallibly preserved from error. They did not need a revelation to inform them of what had passed before their eyes, nor to point out those inferences and moral maxims which were obvious to every attentive and considerate observer. Moses could tell, without a divine afflatus, that, on such a night, the Israelites marched out of Egypt, and at such a place they murmured against God; and Solomon could remark, that "a soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger;" or, that "better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith."* It is with respect to such passages of Scripture only, as it did not exceed the natural ability of the writer to compose, that I would admit the motion of *superintendence*, if it should be admitted at all. But, perhaps, this word, though of established use, and almost undisputed authority, should be entirely laid aside, as insufficient to express even the lowest degree of inspiration. In the passages of Scripture which we are now considering, I conceive the writers to have been not merely superintended, that they might commit no error, but likewise to have been moved or excited by the Holy Ghost to record particular events, and set down particular observations. They were not like other historians, who introduce facts and reflections into the narratives which they compose, in the exercise of their own judgment, and according to their own ideas of propriety; but they rather resembled amanuenses, who commit to writing such things only as have been selected by their employer. Passages written by the direction, and under the care of the Divine Spirit, may be said, in an inferior sense, to be inspired; whereas, had the men written them at the suggestion of their own spirit, they would have been mere human compositions; and though free from error, would have been exactly on a level with those parts of profane writings which are agreeable to truth. Superintendence, indeed, is no peculiar kind of inspiration, but is the care exercised by Providence over all the sacred writers, in whatever degree or manner inspired, to secure a faithful relation of the histories, doctrines, prophecies, and precepts, which they were employed to communicate to mankind.

Secondly, there are other passages of Scripture, in composing which, the minds of the writers must have been supernaturally endowed with more than ordinary vigour. It is impossible for us, and perhaps it was not possible for the inspired writer himself, to determine where nature ended and inspiration began. He could not have marked, in all cases, with precision, the limits which separated the natural operation of his faculties, and the agency of the Spirit of God. It is enough to know, in general, that there are many parts of Scripture, in which, though the unassisted mind might have proceeded some steps, a divine impulse was necessary to enable it to advance. I think, for example, that the evangelists could not have written the history of Christ, if they had not enjoyed miraculous assistance. Two of them, Matthew and John, accompanied our Saviour during the whole, or the greater part of his personal ministry. At the close of that period, or rather a considerable number of years after it, the gospel of Matthew having been published, as is generally agreed, at least eight years, and that of John between sixty and seventy, posterior to the ascension, there can be no doubt that they had forgotten some of his discourses and miracles; that they recollected others indistinctly; and that, if left to themselves, they would have been in danger of producing an unfair and inaccurate account, by omissions and additions, or by confounding one thing with another. Simple and illiterate men, who had never been accustomed to exercise their intellectual faculties, could not, it is probable, have retailed his shorter discourses immediately after they were delivered, and much less those of greater length, as his sermon on the Mount, and his last instructions to his disciples. Besides, from so large a mass of materials, writers of uncultivated minds, such as Jewish fishermen and publicans may be conceived to have been, who were not in the habit of distinguishing and classifying, could not have made a judicious selection: nor would persons, unskilled in the art of composition, have been able to express themselves in such terms as should ensure a faithful representation of doctrines and facts, and with such dignity as the nature of the subject required. A divine influence, therefore, must have been exerted, by which their memories and judgments were invigorated, and they were enabled to relate the discourses and miracles of their Master with fidelity, and in a manner the best fitted to impress the readers of their histories. The promise of the Holy Ghost to bring to their remembrance all things whatsoever Christ had said to them,* proves, that in writing the gospels, their mental powers received from his agency new degrees of strength and capacity.

Farther, there are several passages of Scripture in which there is such elevation of thought and style, as clearly shows the faculties of the writers to have been raised above their ordinary state. There is a grandeur, a sublimity of ideas and expressions, of which their acknowledged powers were obviously incapable, and which must, therefore have been the result of superior influence. Should a person of moderate talents give as elevated a description of the majesty and attributes of God, or reason as profoundly on the mysterious doctrines of religion, as a man of the most exalted genius and extensive learning, we could not fail to be convinced that he was supernaturally assisted; and the conviction would be still stronger, if his composition should transcend the highest efforts of the human mind. In either of these cases, it would be impossible to account for the effect by the operation of any ordinary cause. Some of the sacred writers were taken from the lowest ranks of life; and yet sentiments so dignified, and representations of divine things so grand and majestic, occur in their writings, that the noblest flights of human genius, when compared with them, appear cold and insipid. This remark on the matter and language of Scripture admits of an obvious application to the prophetical and devotional books of the Old Testament, and may be extended to many other passages, in which the purest and most sublime lessons are delivered on the subject of God and religion, by the natives of a country unacquainted with the philosophy, the literature, and the arts of the more polished nations of antiquity.

Thirdly, it is manifest, with respect to many passages of the Scripture, that the subjects of which they treat must have been directly revealed to the writers. They could not have been known by natural means; nor was the knowledge of them attainable by a simple elevation of the faculties, because they were not deductions from the principles of reason, or from truths already discovered, but were founded on the free determination of the will of God, and his prescience of human affairs. With the abilities of an angel, we could not explore the thoughts and purposes of the divine mind. This degree of inspiration we ascribe to those who were empowered to reveal heavenly mysteries, "which eye had not seen, and ear had not heard;" to those who were sent with particular messages from God to his people; and to those who were employed to predict future events. The plan of redemption being an effect of the sovereign counsels of heaven, it could

* Prov. xv. 1. 17.

* John xiv. 26.

not have been known but by a communication from the Father of lights.

This kind of inspiration has been called the inspiration of *suggestion*. It may be deemed of little importance to dispute about a word; but *suggestion* seeming to express an immediate operation on the mind, by which ideas are excited in it, is of too limited signification to denote the various modes in which the prophets and apostles were made acquainted with supernatural truths. God revealed himself to them, not only by suggestion, but by dreams, visions, voices, and the ministry of angels. This degree of inspiration, in strict propriety of speech, should be called *revelation;* a word preferable to suggestion, because it is expressive of all the ways in which God communicated new ideas to the minds of his servants. It is a word, too, chosen by the Holy Ghost himself, to signify the discovery of truth formerly unknown to the apostles. The last book of the New Testament, which is a collection of prophecies, is called the *revelation* of Jesus Christ. Paul says that he received his Gospel by *revelation;* that "by *revelation* the mystery was made known to him, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was then *revealed* unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;" and in another place, having remarked that "eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had entered into the heart of man, the things which God had prepared for them that love him," he adds, "but God hath *revealed* them unto us by his Spirit."*

I have not names to distinguish the two other kinds of inspiration. The names used by Dr. Doddridge and others, superintendence, elevation, and suggestion, do not convey the ideas stated in the preceding particulars, and are liable to material objections, as we have already shown with respect to the first and the last of them. Superintendence does not include the notion of a moving or exciting influence on the minds of the sacred writers, and consequently cannot denote any kind of inspiration: and suggestion being a word of too limited a meaning to express all that is intended, ought to give place to one more appropriate, which is furnished by the Holy Spirit himself. By those who use the term elevation, to signify a particular kind of inspiration, it is confined to such parts of Scripture as are lofty and sublime; whereas it is easy to perceive, that there must have been, in some cases, an elevation of the faculties, or a raising of them above their ordinary state, even when the province of the writer was simple narrative. This has been proved by a particular reference to the evangelists. The account now given of the inspiration of the Scriptures has, I think, these two recommendations, that there is no part of them which does not fall under one or other of the three foregoing heads; and that it carefully discriminates the different kinds or degrees of the agency of the Holy Spirit on the minds of the different writers.

From the preceding statement it appears, that we do not apply the term, inspiration, in the same sense to the whole of the Scripture, because the same degree of divine assistance was not necessary in the composition of every part of it. In some parts, if I may speak so, there is more of God than in others. When a prophet predicts the events of futurity, or an apostle makes known the mysteries of redemption, it is God alone who speaks; and the voice or the pen of a man is merely the instrument employed for the communication of his will. When Moses relates the miracles of Egypt, and the journeys of the Israelites in the wilderness, or the evangelists relate the history of Christ, they tell nothing but what they formerly knew; but without the assistance of the Spirit, they could not have told it so well. "In some cases," it has been properly remarked, "inspiration only produced correctness and accuracy in relating past occurrences, or in reciting the words of others; in other cases it communicated ideas not only new and unknown before, but infinitely beyond the reach of unassisted human intellect; and sometimes inspired prophets delivered predictions for the use of future ages, which they did not themselves comprehend, and which cannot be fully understood till they are accomplished."*

From the preceding account of inspiration, it is easy to perceive in what sense the Scriptures, taken as a whole, may be pronounced to be the Word of God. We give them this denomination, because all the parts of which they consist have been written by persons moved, directed, and assisted by his Holy Spirit; but we do not mean, that all the sentiments contained in them are just, and all the examples are worthy of imitation. In the sacred writings, we meet with sayings and actions, which are neither wiser nor better for being found in them than if they had occurred in any ordinary history. I apprehend, that some persons, from want of reflection, fall into a mistake in this matter. They quote a sentiment as authoritative because they read it in the Scriptures, without waiting to consider by whom it was uttered; and draw arguments for the regulation of their own conduct and that of others from an action, without previously examining whether it received the divine approbation or not. Yet it is certain, not only that wicked men and wicked spirits are often introduced as speaking and acting, but that, as the saints of whom mention is made were not perfect and infallible, any more than the saints who are now alive, their opinions and conduct must not instantly be presumed to be right, unless it appear that they were under the influence of the Spirit of God, or their example be expressly or implicitly commended. From the mere admission of any fact into the inspired history, no other conclusion can be warrantably drawn, than that it actually took place, and it was the will of God that we should be acquainted with it: its moral nature, its conformity or disconformity to the standard of truth and rectitude, must be ascertained by some other test than its simple insertion in the Bible. Were clear ideas formed on this subject, some misapplications of passages would be prevented, and some objections which are brought against the inspiration of the sacred books, would either be not advanced at all, or would be immediately perceived to be inconclusive or unjust.

For the more complete elucidation of this point, let it be considered, that there are two different senses in which a book may be denominated the Word of God. In the first place, the meaning may be, that all the contents of the book were spoken or revealed by God himself; or that they proceeded directly from the eternal source of wisdom and purity, and consequently are all true and holy. It is evident, that, according to this sense of the Word of God, the name can be given only to a part of the Scriptures, because they contain, besides a revelation of the divine counsels, an account of human opinions, manners, customs, superstitions, and crimes. Sometimes it is God who speaks, and at other times it is man. Now, we are presented with a view of his wise and holy dispensations; then, there is a delineation of the policy, the ambition, the folly of his creatures. In the second place, a book may be styled the Word of God, to signify, that it was composed by his direction and assistance, and that every thing contained in it was inserted by his special appointment. It is plain, that, consistently with this definition, there may be things in the book which were neither spoken nor approved by God, though for wise purposes he has assigned them a place in it. In this sense the title, the Word of God, is applicable to the Scriptures at large, the whole having been written by men whom he

* Rev. i. 1. Gal. i. 12. Eph. iii. 3, 5. 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

* Bishop of Lincoln's Introduction to the Study of the Bible, chap. i. p. 16.

inspired, and who, being guided and controlled by his Spirit, could neither fall into error, nor be guilty of mutilating and corrupting them by omissions and interpolations. Hence we are authorized, not only to consider all the doctrines, all the precepts, all the promises, and all the threatenings, delivered by God himself, or by others in his name, as true, righteous, and faithful; but farther to believe, that the events which are said to have happened, and the words and actions which are represented to have been spoken and done, did so happen, and were so spoken and done. But whether the conduct related be wise or foolish, moral or immoral, we must determine by the judgment pronounced in the Scriptures themselves on particular cases, or by applying those principles and general rules, which are laid down in them to regulate our decisions.

There remains a question which has engaged a considerable share of attention, Whether inspiration is to be understood as extending to the language as well as to the sentiments? In answering this question, it is necessary to distinguish one part of Scripture from another. In those parts which are delivered in the name of God, which are commands, messages, and communications from him, we cannot suppose that the writers were left to choose their own words, but are necessarily led to conceive them to have adhered with equal strictness to the words as to the thoughts. This must have been the case when they announced heavenly mysteries and new doctrines, of which they could have had no conception, unless the words had been suggested to them; and when they delivered predictions which they did not understand; for it is plain that here the inspiration consisted solely in presenting the words to their minds. They were much in the same situation with a person who sets down a passage in an unknown tongue, at the dictation of another. And that they did not always understand their own prophecies, is obvious from the words of Peter, who represents them as studying them, and trying to discover their meaning,—"searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."* Thus far, I do not see upon what ground it can be denied that inspiration extended to the words.

With regard to other parts of Scripture, consisting of histories, moral reflections, and devotional pieces, I would not contend for the inspiration of the language in the same sense. It is reasonable to believe that the writers were permitted to exercise their own faculties to a certain extent, and to express themselves in their natural manner. At the same time, when we consider the promise of Christ to his disciples, that when they were brought before kings and governors for his sake, it should be given them in that hour what they should speak,† and recollect the affirmation of Paul that he and the other apostles used not the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost taught,‡ we cannot suppose that, when they were most at liberty, they were in no degree directed by a secret influence in the selection of words and phrases. It was of the utmost importance, that the facts and observations which God intended for the instruction of mankind in all ages, should be properly expressed; and there was a danger that errors would be committed by such persons as the penmen of the Scriptures, the greater part of whom were illiterate, and ignorant of the art of composition. If we had nothing to depend upon but their own skill and attention, we could have no certainty that the statements are always accurate, and our piety would be frequently disturbed by the suspicion, that what is only a difficulty might be a mistake. It must be granted, that even in relating what they knew, what they had seen, what they had learned from the testimony of others, the sacred writers were assisted, although we should concede only, that occasionally a more proper word or expression was suggested to them than would have occurred to themselves; and consequently, the style was not strictly their own, but was a style corrected and improved, and different from what they would have spontaneously used.

The objection against the inspiration of the language, founded on the diversity of style observable in the sacred writers, falls to the ground, if upon the whole they were permitted to express themselves in their natural way. If a diversity be remarked even in prophecy and revelation, properly so called, it may be accounted for by the hypothesis, which is in the highest degree probable, that God accommodated himself in his communications to the character and genius of the persons employed; and surely no man in his senses will affirm that there was only one style in which he could communicate his will. There is no force in the argument, that if the words were inspired, translations would be unlawful. There is no sacredness in the terms of a particular language, although they may be applied to a sacred purpose; they are still arbitrary signs, for which equivalent signs may be substituted. Those who use this argument, do not scruple to translate into English or Latin the ten precepts of the moral law, which were undoubtedly published by God himself *verbatim* in Hebrew. The only proper inference from the inspiration of the words is, that we should be exceedingly careful when we translate the Scriptures, to make word answer word, and phrase correspond to phrase, so far as the idiom of the two languages will permit.

The persons employed in declaring the will of God to the world, and committing it to writing, were not different from other men, in respect of their natural talents and dispositions. There was no peculiar aptitude in them for the work; for no original conformation of mind, no course of education or habit of life, can be considered as predisposing individuals for the reception of supernatural gifts, which were distributed in the exercise of Divine sovereignty. Those who were inspired are called prophets and apostles; the former signifying the messengers of God under the old dispensation, and the latter his messengers under the new. But the difference of the name implies no difference in the influence exerted upon their minds; no difference in the kind of influence, although there was a difference in degree, the apostles being favoured with a clearer illumination than the prophets. On some occasions, God declared his will immediately; as when he proclaimed the threatening and the promise in the ears of our first parents, and subsequently made revelations to the patriarchs; and particularly when his awful voice, issuing from the midst of darkness and tempest, published the decalogue to the trembling millions assembled at the base of the mountain on which he appeared. But, in general, he made use of the ministry of men. With regard to character, they were saints; for "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." There were, however, a few exceptions, among which Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, holds a conspicuous place; but the inspiration of such persons was transient, and granted for a temporary purpose. Those who were permanently employed in communicating the will of God by word or by writing, were men of another spirit; and it does not seem to us that it would have been suitable to the holiness of God, to have selected for so sacred a work, persons whose minds were alienated from the truth, and under the habitual influence of sin. As some of them were intended only to promote the interests of religion in their own age, they have left no records behind them, and their instructions are lost, or only a few fragments of them have been preserved. But others were directed by the Spir-

* 1 Pet. i. 11. † Matt. x. 19. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 13.

it to commit their revelations to writing, for the benefit of succeeding ages; and the books collected into one volume, and called by way of eminence the Bible, constitute the perpetual rule of faith and practice.

To these persons God made known his will in various ways, as Paul expresses it, πολυτρόπως,* in divers manners. Why he did not adhere to one mode, but changed it to different persons, and to the same person at different times, it is not for us to inquire. Sometimes he revealed himself by secret suggestion, or by infusing knowledge into the mind without the intervention of means. He who created the spirit of man has direct access to it, and stands in no need of words or external signs as the vehicle of communication. During profound silence, and complete abstraction from sensible things, the souls of his servants were irradiated by the pure rays of celestial light. To this mode of communication David refers, when he says, "the Spirit of the Lord spake by me," or "in me,"† and Peter, when he tells us that "the Spirit of Christ, who was in the prophets, testified beforehand his sufferings, and the glory that should follow."‡ In this manner were the apostles endowed with the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel; and Paul in particular, "received not the doctrine which he preached of men, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."‖ Sometimes the will of God was communicated by audible sounds, or by a voice which is called the voice of God, because the sounds were formed by his immediate agency. This voice spake to our first parents, to Abraham, to Samuel, and on many occasions to Moses; for this is the account which he gives: "And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with Him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy-seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims."§ Again, a third mode of revelation was by visions, or representations made to the senses or to the imagination. We have examples in Isaiah, who saw Jehovah attended by the seraphim in the temple;¶ in Ezekiel, by the river Chebar;** and in Daniel, to whom the mighty revelations on the state of the world were exhibited in symbolical figures. Another mode of revelation was by dreams, than which nothing is usually more vain, nor is there greater folly than to consider them as portending future events; but a different estimate must be formed of supernatural dreams, which have been regarded in all ages as means of communication with superior beings. Οναρ εκ Διος εστιν,†† was a saying of the ancients; and dreams are related by them, which, whether true or false, were supposed to be of a higher character than the arbitrary creations of fancy. We have instances in Jacob's dream at Bethel, and in that of Paul, to whom there appeared a man of Macedonia, saying, "Come over and help us."‡‡ In some cases, the design of the dreams was obvious; but in others, explanation was necessary. On a few occasions, the dream was sent to one person, and another was employed to interpret it. You will remember the history of Pharaoh and Joseph, and of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel. Lastly, revelations were made by the ministry of angels, as by Gabriel to Daniel, and by the same messenger to the blessed virgin.

I shall take notice, in a few words, of the peculiar privilege of Moses. "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold."* It is said in the account of his death, "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."† Moses was the only person who could have explained these words, but as he has left no commentary upon them, we are ignorant of their meaning. This, however, they obviously import, that he enjoyed a familiar intercourse with God, to which other inspired men were not admitted; and that the revelations made to him surpassed those with which they were favoured in clearness, and resembled the communications which one friend makes to another, when they meet and converse together.

* Heb. i. 1. † 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 11.
‖ Gal. i. 12. § Num. vii. 89. ¶ Isa. vi.
** Ezek. i. 1. †† A dream is from Jove, or God.
‡‡ Acts xvi. 9.

LECTURE XII.

STATE OF THE SACRED TEXT.

Existing MSS. of the Scriptures—Various readings—Causes assigned for them—Sources whence they are collected; From different MSS., the Writings of the Fathers, ancient Versions and conjectural Criticism—Account of the principal Editions of the New Testament—Utility of this Inquiry.

In some preceding lectures, we have considered the evidences of our religion, and the authority of the records in which it is contained. There is a question intimately connected with it, to which I mean to direct your attention in this lecture. It relates to the state in which these records have come down to us, and is confessedly of great importance, as every person must wish to be satisfied, whether they are a faithful representation of the original documents, or have been altered and corrupted through carelessness or design.

We do not possess the original copies of the sacred writings. The autographs of the apostles and prophets have long since disappeared. The copy of the law, which was written by the hand of Moses himself, seems to have been preserved for many ages, and it was probably that copy which was found by Hilkiah the high-priest, and read in the ears of Josiah;‡ but it perished, we may presume, in the destruction of the temple. We have no information respecting the original copies of any other parts of the Jewish Scriptures. From a passage in Tertullian, who flourished towards the close of the second century, it has been inferred, that the autographs of the apostles were then in existence, but no mention is made of them by any later author, and they have been lost with all the other writings of that age. Modern times can boast only of transcripts, removed from the originals by more or fewer steps, according to the age in which they were written. The most ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, are the Codex Alexandrinus, so called because it was brought from Alexandria in Egypt; the Codex Vaticanus, in the Vatican library at Rome; the Codex Bezæ, or Codex Cantabrigiensis, which was presented by Beza to the University of Cambridge; the Codex Cottonianus, in the Cottonian library, containing, however, only fragments of the four Gospels; the Codex Ephremi; and the Codex Claramontanus of the epistles of Paul. The dates of these manuscripts cannot be certainly fixed; but the oldest of them cannot be referred farther back than the fifth, or perhaps the fourth century, and is posterior to the last book of the New Testament by at least three hundred years. There are no manuscripts of the Old Testament of equal antiquity.

It may be presumed, that the persons employed in transcribing the sacred writings would be at great pains to make the copies accurate, both from reverence for books which they believed to be inspired and from a regard to their own interest, as errors, when discovered, would have prevented the sale of the copies, or have

* Num. xii. 6—8. † Deut. xxxiv. 10. ‡ 2 Kings xxii. 8.

greatly lowered the price. Yet, without a miracle, every transcript could not have been a faultless representation of the original; and that no supernatural influence was exerted upon their minds, may be very confidently inferred from the different readings which appear upon a collation of manuscripts. It is certain that they cannot all be right, and it is probable that not one of them is perfectly correct.

The existence of various readings in the Old Testament was remarked, if not, as some suppose, in the days of Ezra, yet as far back as the fifth century, when the Jewish work called the Masora was composed, or at least was begun by the Jewish critics, who are known by the name of Masorites. The design of it was to ascertain the true reading, and much scrupulous care has been employed in numbering the verses, the words, the letters, the vowel points, and the accents. As they did not venture to alter the text, for which they entertained a superstitious reverence, but contented themselves with recording what they judged to be the true reading, we have a specimen of their criticisms on the margins of some of our printed Bibles, and are referred to them by a small circle over the word, for which that on the margin is to be substituted. Hence the origin of the words, Keri and Chetib, which frequently occur. The Chetib denotes what is written, and the Keri what ought to be read; that is, you are not to read the text as it stands, but to correct it by the note. I shall give only one instance, in which there can be no doubt that the Masorites have done right in correcting the text, because they have the sanction of apostolical authority. In the tenth verse of the sixteenth Psalm, we read in Hebrew, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer חסידך *chasidcha, thy holy ones*, to see corruption." But on the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted it thus, and applied it to Christ, "Neither wilt thou suffer חסידך *chasidcha, thy holy One*, to see corruption;" and it is in this way that the Masoretic note requires us to read it, by marking the *jod*, the sign of the plural, as redundant. Had they wished to favour their own cause against Christians, they would have left the reading in the text unnoticed, and might have done so without incurring the charge of corrupting it, since it seems to have been vitiated before their time. But they acted with perfect fairness, and restored the word which, we are sure, was used by the Psalmist. In modern times, the industry of learned men has greatly augmented the number of various readings. More than six hundred manuscripts were more or less fully consulted for Dr. Kennicott's edition of the Hebrew Bible; and four hundred and seventy-nine manuscripts, besides two hundred and eighty-eight printed editions, for De Rossi's Variæ Lectiones Veteris Testamenti.

As I shall have occasion afterwards to speak more particularly of the various editions of the New Testament, I only observe at present, that to obtain an accurate text has been deemed an object of great importance almost since the revival of learning; and that, in this work, many have laboured with great diligence and ability, among whom Mill, Wetstein, and Griesbach, are eminently entitled to notice.

The following causes of various readings have been assigned. First, when a copy was written from the dictation of another, he who dictated might read or pronounce wrong, or the transcriber might hear wrong, and in either case a mistake would be produced. Secondly, as some Hebrew and Greek letters are similar, and according to the modes of writing in former times, had a greater resemblance to each other than at present, negligent copyists might substitute one letter or word for another. Thirdly, a transcriber having read a whole clause at once, and retaining the sense, but forgetting some of the precise words, substituted a synonymous word, and thus altered the text. Fourthly, a transcriber, casting his eye on a preceding line or word, would write over again what he had written already, and thus make an addition to the text. Fifthly, a transcriber, directing his eye to a word or line following the place which he was transcribing, might write from the subsequent place, and omit all that intervened. Sixthly, a person, having written one or more words from a wrong place, and not observing his mistake, or not choosing to correct it lest he should spoil the appearance of the manuscript, might return to the proper place, and thus insert something into the text which did not belong to it. Lastly, when a transcriber had made an omission, and afterwards observed it, he then subjoined what he had omitted, and thus produced a transposition.

These are all instances of mistake. But some various readings may be traced to design. Critical transcribers sometimes transferred what they deemed a clearer or fuller expression, or added a circumstance to the narrative before them, from a parallel passage; and this liberty has been frequently taken in the gospels. They sometimes corrected the New Testament from the Greek version of the Old, with a view to make the quotations in the former agree with the passages in the latter. They are charged, also, with having sometimes altered it in conformity to the Vulgate. They made alterations in their copies, in order to correct some word which appeared to them faulty, or which they did not understand; they omitted words which they reckoned superfluous, or added words to illustrate what they judged defective or improper. Various readings have also been produced, by transferring to the text glosses or notes which had been written on the margin. Some have been attributed to wilful corruption, with a view to serve the purposes of a party. This crime has been charged upon the Jews, upon heretics, and even upon those who were called orthodox. The accusation may be true in some instances; but it has been justly remarked, that "mistaken zeal is forward to impute false readings to design in those whom it opposes; but we ought not to ascribe them to this principle rashly, when they might have naturally arisen from chance, or where there is no positive presumption or evidence of design."

No single manuscript can be supposed to exhibit the original text, without the slightest variation; it is to be presumed, that in all manuscripts, errors more or fewer in number are to be found. It is therefore by a collation of manuscripts, that we may hope to obtain a faithful representation of the sacred books, as they were delivered to the church by the inspired writers. In estimating the value of manuscripts, the preference is given to the most ancient, because they approach nearest to the time of the sacred writers, and in proportion to the less frequency of transcription, there is the less danger of error. The antiquity of a manuscript is ascertained by testimony, or by internal marks, and particularly by the form of the letters. Those which are written in *uncial* letters, as they are called, or capital letters, are supposed to be the oldest. Some, however, have considered this proof as not quite satisfactory, because copyists might, from choice or design, imitate more ancient writing, or give a *fac simile* of the manuscript before them, to display their dexterity, or to enhance the worth of their copy. Again, those manuscripts are most esteemed which appear to have been written with great care, not only because we may conclude that they are faithful copies of the older manuscripts, from which they are transcribed, but because, when a various reading occurs, we have reason to believe, that it was not introduced by the copyists but was found in the manuscript before them.

Critics have divided the manuscripts of the New Testament, of which above five hundred have been consulted, into classes, assigning to each different degrees of authority. Griesbach has established three classes, the Alexandrine, the Occidental or Western, and the

Oriental or Byzantine, and has given the highest rank to the first. He has distinguished them by the name of *recensions*, which signifies the same thing with a word more common and generally intelligible, editions. Scholz has found out five recensions, the Alexandrine, the Occidental, the Asiatic, the Byzantine, and the Cyprian. Matthæi has rejected all these divisions, and maintained that there is only one class of manuscripts containing, what others have called, the Byzantine text. The classification of Griesbach has been disputed by two learned men in this country who have endeavoured to show that it is destitute of any solid foundation, and that some important alterations which he has made in the received text upon its authority, ought not to be admitted. I refer to Dr. Laurence, who has published remarks on the classification of manuscripts adopted by Griesbach in his edition of the New Testament; and to Mr. Nolan, the author of a work entitled an Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate, or received text of the New Testament, in which he introduces a new classification, into the Egyptian, the Palestine, and the Byzantine, and gives the preference to the latter, on which the *textus receptus* is founded. From this short review of the different opinions entertained by learned men, it appears that some degree of uncertainty still rests upon the subject, and that after all that has been done, the field is still open to new inquirers.

There are other sources of various readings besides manuscripts. Some are collected from the writings of the Fathers, in the faith that they have accurately quoted from their copies. Here critics have shown how sensible they are of the necessity of caution, by laying down a variety of rules for judging in what cases the quotations may be considered as faithful. But after all, we tread upon slippery ground. We know how careless moderns often are in citing passages; that they trust to their memories to save themselves the trouble of looking at the text, and that sometimes they are not solicitous to be exact, but intend only to give the sense, and throw in occasionally a word for the purpose of illustration. We have no reason to believe that the Fathers were at greater pains; and I should think it probable that they referred less frequently to the text than we do, from the form of their manuscripts, which required to be unrolled, and from the difficulty of finding a particular sentence, as they wanted those minute marks of reference which we possess in the division of the Scriptures into chapters and verses. I do not deny all authority to their quotations, but I should not be disposed to lay much stress upon them, except when they are brought forward on some occasion where accuracy was indispensable, or occur in commentaries which were professedly written to explain them.

Ancient versions of the Scriptures are also another source of various readings. But here, I think, greater caution, if possible, is necessary. For in the first place, we are not certain that those versions have come down to us in an uncorrupted state, or rather we are certain that they have suffered as much as the manuscripts of the Scriptures by transcription, so that we cannot be sure in many cases, that where they differ now from the originals, they differed at first. In the second place, we never can know, that where they differ from the received text, there was a different reading in their copies, because it is possible that they misapprehended the sense. They may have mistranslated; they may have substituted a term or phrase for another, supposing it to be equivalent, while it was not; they may have changed the meaning, in adapting to it the idiom of their own language; they may have been guilty of oversight, just as modern translators are. If a person were to read a variety of modern translations, and not to know that they were all made from the same text, I have no doubt that he would in some cases conclude that they had been formed upon different texts. It is, therefore, with extreme hesitation that ancient versions should be admitted as authorities for various readings. There is one case where their testimony may be received, namely, "when the original is absurd, or yields no sense, a single version may give probability to another reading, especially when from it the present reading might have naturally arisen."

Conjectural criticism, which has supplied some readings is a dangerous expedient, which should never be resorted to, except when emendation is manifestly required, and no assistance can be derived from any other quarter; and even then the proposed correction can rise no higher than probability. It is astonishing that some men have not been deterred by reverence for the word of God, from making too liberal a use of it.

Rules have been proposed for judging concerning various readings. The greater part of them are of no value, and possess no authority which entitles them to attention; but others are so evidently right, that they ought to be received into the text, although they should be found in no printed edition. The limits of this lecture will not permit me, as I intended, to give an account of the principles laid down by writers on sacred criticism, for estimating the value of readings with a view to the emendation of the received text; and I shall therefore content myself with referring you to some of the books in which they will be found; Horne's Introduction, Gerard's Institutes of Biblical Criticism, Institutio Interpretis Novi Testamenti by Ernesti, the Prolegomena of Mill, Wetstein, and Griesbach, the preface to the work of Bengelius entitled Gnomon Novi Testamenti, &c.

It remains to give a short account of the principal editions of the New Testament.

The first is the Complutensian, which was printed at Complutum or Alcala, in Spain, in A. D. 1514, but was not published till some years after, so that the edition of Erasmus, which was in fact posterior, appeared before it. It was prepared and published under the patronage of Cardinal Ximenes. The manuscripts used by the editors are lost, but although they are said to have been ancient, it is now generally understood that they were of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, and consequently possessed little intrinsic value. They have also been charged with introducing some changes in conformity to the Vulgate.

The first edition of the new Testament by Erasmus, appeared in A. D. 1516, and was followed by several other editions. The first was drawn up in great haste, in the short space of five months, and on this account could not be of much value as a critical work. The manuscripts which he consulted were not many nor of great antiquity. The editions which appeared after the Publication of the Complutensian were corrected by it.

The next edition which demands attention is that of Robert Stephens, in A. D. 1546. He adhered closely to the Complutensian and Erasmian editions, but not servilely, for he has adopted various readings on the authority of manuscripts, which were consulted to the number of fifteen. But some of those manuscripts contained only a part of the New Testament; they were examined, not by Robert himself, but by his son Henry, who, although he proved one of the most learned men of his age, was then a youth of eighteen; and it is affirmed that not much critical skill was exercised in the formation of the text.

Beza gave his first edition to the world in A. D. 1565. But although he had access to a collection of various readings by Stephens, possessed an ancient manuscript of the Gospels and Acts, and another of the Epistles of Paul, and besides had an opportunity to consult the Syriac version, which had been recently published, he is said not to have made a full use of these advantages. He has corrected the edition of Stephens only in fifty places,

and the alterations do not always rest upon sufficient authority.

In the year 1624, an edition was printed at the press of Elzevir without a name, and to this day it is not known by whose labour it was prepared. Whoever he was, he has formed the text upon the edition of Stephens and Beza, although in a few instances he has departed from both. This is called the *textus receptus*,* because since that time it has been admitted into all common editions. How this edition acquired such authority as to settle the text, it is not easy to say. Griesbach ascribes it to the opinion, that the Elzevir editions were as distinguished by accuracy as they were by the beauty of the type. He justly observes, that a corrupt text might be printed without a single typographical error, but would not for this reason become genuine.

It is evidently ignorance and prejudice which would lead any person to consider the received text as so sacred that no alteration ought to be made in it. Its history shows that its claim is disputable, and that it may be superseded by a text more carefully compiled. Too little had yet been done to render the labours of subsequent critics unnecessary. The learned world, or such of them at least as viewed the subject in a calm and impartial light, were prepared to receive the editions of Mill, Wetstein, and Griesbach, which appeared in the course of the last century, not to mention the editions of other distinguished men, who have contributed their part to exhibit the genuine text of the New Testament. No capable judge could object to the design, whatever faults he might find with the execution of it. As new manuscripts were discovered, it was fair to listen to their testimony, since those which were consulted by the earlier editors had no title alone to be heard; and it is not a little surprising, that some celebrated men, as Dr. Owen in the seventeenth century, and Dr. Whitby in the beginning of the eighteenth, should have exclaimed against any attempt to new-model the text as presumptuous and dangerous. The report of thirty thousand various readings collected by Mill was no doubt alarming; and the numbers since collected by Wetstein and Griesbach is much more formidable; but the fears felt for the sacred writings have proved to be imaginary. Of the various readings many have no authority, being found only in one manuscript or two; others have only some degree of probability; and those which appear to be well supported very often consist in the omission or insertion of the article, or some little word which does not affect the sense, in the order of words and phrases, in the spelling of proper names, and other matters equally insignificant. Important alterations have indeed been made, particularly in passages which relate to the divinity of Christ; but besides that their propriety is disputed, and strong reasons have been advanced for the common reading, the doctrine is so clearly taught in other passages, that the admission of them makes no change in our faith. The truth is, that by a hundred and fifty thousand various readings, no doctrine or duty of our holy religion is affected; and the labours of biblical critics have terminated in establishing, instead of weakening, the authority of the text. We are now fully satisfied, that we possess substantially the same text which was exhibited in the autographs of the evangelists and apostles; and this is also the result of the critical labours which have been bestowed upon the Old Testament.

It is not expected that every minister of religion shall be a profound biblical critic. The talents which are necessary to success in this study do not fall to the lot of all, and comparatively few enjoy the aids and opportunities, without which talents will be of little avail. Books must not only be read, but possessed, for the purpose of frequent consultation, from which most are precluded by their situation and their limited means; and a proficiency in scholarship is indispensable, which can be attained only by deep and persevering study. We shall more easily find fifty good theologians, than one accomplished biblical critic. A man who is himself distinguished in this department, and is one of the most learned bishops of the church of England, has said, that to clergymen in general, criticism is rather a luxury than a necessary; and no person who understands the subject will dispute the assertion. But it would be well if every minister would endeavour to acquire some general knowledge of it, that he may be able to tell on what grounds he believes, not only that the Scriptures were divinely inspired, but that the books called Sacred, contain the genuine writings of the men who were moved by the Holy Ghost. The rapid sketch which has been now given is intended to excite you to inquire for yourselves.

* The received text.

LECTURE XIII.

THE STUDY AND INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

An Acquaintance with the Original Languages a Prerequisite to the Study of the Scriptures—Rules of interpreting Scripture stated—External Aids to Interpretation—Scripture the Standard of Faith—Lawfulness of Inferences from Scripture—Conduct of the Church of Rome.

In the preceding lecture, I directed your attention to that part of sacred criticism which is employed in ascertaining the genuine text of Scripture. As long as the autographs of the prophets and apostles were preserved, there was an easy method of settling it; and by an appeal to them, any errors which might have been admitted into particular manuscripts could be corrected. Their history is obscure. There is some reason to think that the original copy of the law of Moses existed in the days of Josiah, and that towards the close of the second century, the books of the New Testament still remained in the handwriting of the authors; but what became of them afterwards, no man can tell. It is probable that the copy of the law perished in the destruction of the first temple; and that the manuscripts of the New Testament were lost amidst the troubles to which the church was exposed during the first three centuries. You see, then, that we possess only transcripts of the records of revelation, in general, no doubt, executed with great care, by persons who were influenced either by a principle of religious reverence, or by a regard to their own interest, being aware that their copies could not have been disposed of if they had been inaccurate, or would have been sold at an inferior price. But it should be considered, that the transcribers were men who might err through inadvertence or incompetence, and that as we have no security for the honesty of them all, some of them might be guilty of wilful corruptions, to serve the purposes of a party. It is not, therefore, upon the faith of a single manuscript that we should settle the text, but by the collation of many manuscripts, and by the assistance derived from other sources, which were mentioned in the preceding lecture.

To ascertain the genuine text is, however, only a preliminary step; the next office of criticism is to discover its meaning, since the Scriptures were given, not to be gazed at with distant reverence, or preserved as a literary curiosity, but to be perused, and understood, and believed. The languages in which they are found were vernacular to those into whose hands they were primarily delivered, but they have long since ceased to be spoken. It is supposed that the Hebrew language was lost during the captivity of the Jews in Babylon.

or that, after their return, it gave way by degrees to the mixed dialect which was spoken in Judea in the days of our Saviour; and we know that the Greek language, which had been partly corrupted before the fall of Constantinople in the fifteenth century, by the introduction of foreign words and idioms, has since degenerated into the Romaic, which differs from it almost as much as Italian does from Latin. The first prerequisite, then, to the study of the Scriptures, is an acquaintance with the languages in which they were composed.

The Old Testament has come down to us in two languages, a part of Ezra, a verse in Jeremiah, and a part of Daniel being written in Chaldee, and all the rest in Hebrew. The interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures is the more difficult, because they are the only books which now exist in that language. The Jewish Targums, or paraphrases, are in Chaldee; and Rabbinical Hebrew is a corrupt mixture of different languages, from which little assistance can be derived for understanding the original tongue. Hence an acquaintance with the kindred languages has been considered as of great use, the Chaldaic, the Syriac, and the Arabic. It has been remarked by critics, that "they discover roots, or primitives, which are not found in the Bible, though their derivatives occur there, and by doing so, point out the signification of these derivatives; that they ascertain the precise signification of roots, and consequently of their derivatives, and the signification of which had been fixed only by conjecture; that they afford the best, and where the ancient versions vary in translating them, the only means of determining with certainty the signification of such words as occur but once or very seldom, in the Bible; that they enable us to discover all the senses of words, some of which only had been collected from the Bible, though others would have better suited particular passages; in particular, that they discover the primary signification of many roots, even such as are most commonly used, the secondary senses of which have alone been attended to, though the primary sense would throw light on some texts; and that they assist us to understand the meaning of phrases, or idiomical combinations of words which are found in the Bible, but the exact import of which could not be determined by it." If there were many books in the Hebrew language we might explain, by their assistance, every word and phrase which occurs in the Old Testament; but as this is not the case, our next resource is to consult those languages which have been derived from it, or are, together with it, branches from the same primitive stock. If there were only one book in Latin, as it could not be supposed to contain the whole language, we should be at a loss to understand some words and phrases in it; but I have no doubt that the Italian, Spanish, and French languages, which are more or less intimately allied to it, would help us in some of our difficulties.

The Greek of the New Testament is more easily understood, because there are many books composed in that language. Yet an acquaintance with classical Greek alone will not fully qualify us to interpret the gospels and epistles, not only because Syriac and Latin words occur in them, but because they abound in foreign idioms, and use words in peculiar senses, which were unknown to the natives of Greece. There has, indeed, been a difference of opinion among learned men upon this subject. While some admit what has been now stated, others contend that the Greek of the New Testament is pure, among whom Blackwall, the author of the book entitled Sacred Classics, holds a distinguished place. It must be acknowledged that he has displayed great research and ingenuity in vindicating the inspired writers from the charge of solecism and barbarism, and that in many instances he has produced, from the most approved authors, the same combinations of terms, and the same irregularity of construction; but, after all, it must be allowed, that the language of the New Testament is different from that of the ancient historians and philosophers. It has been called the Greek of the Synagogue, or Hellenistic Greek, from the name of Hellenists given to Jews living in foreign countries, who used the Greek language, but introduced into it modes of expression borrowed from their native tongue, and employed some of its words in a sense founded on the usage of Judea. This kind of Greek is found in the translation of the Seventy, the study of which is therefore of great importance, to assist us in understanding the language of the New Testament, which was drawn up by persons who, like those translators, wrote in Greek but thought in Hebrew. Let me add, that for the same purpose an acquaintance with the Old Testament in the original is of great advantage, and will enable us to account for forms of construction, the use of prepositions, peculiar phrases, and the application of terms, which would otherwise seem strange, and perhaps would not be intelligible. The phrase, *ουκ αν σωθη πασα σαρξ*, which we translate, "no flesh should be saved," but which, literally rendered, is, "all flesh would not be saved," must have sounded uncouthly in the ears of a Greek, and the meaning would not have been obvious to him, although the words were familiar, because the whole expression was different from the idiom of his native tongue, and the word *σαρξ* was used in a sense to which his countrymen did not apply it. In pure Greek, it signifies the *muscular substance which surrounds the bones of animals;* but here it means *men*, and in other places, the *corruption of nature*, *infirmity*, *external privileges*, &c. The sense would present itself at first sight to a Jew.

By a critical knowledge of the original languages of the Scriptures, we ascertain the grammatical sense, and may be able to translate them into our own language, so as to express the meaning with perfect fidelity. This will not be the effect of a version servilely literal, which will sometimes give no meaning at all, but of a version which attends not only to the words, but to the genius of the two languages, and substitutes for the peculiarities of the one the corresponding idioms of the other. There is an error into which some have been betrayed, by paying too much deference to etymology, and to the idiomatical character of a language, which has led them to suppose words and expressions to be very emphatical, which to persons familiar with the language had no more force than the corresponding terms and phrases in our own. You will find wonderful discoveries of this kind in the writings of minute critics, but in general they have no better foundation than ignorance and fancy.

Your time will not permit me to speak of the benefit which may arise from translations, ancient and modern: and I proceed to observe, that, to ascertain the grammatical sense of the Scriptures, is only a preliminary step. Our next business is to discover the true meaning of them, or to find out the sentiments which the sacred writers intended to convey. Besides the simple perusal of the Scriptures, there are various methods to be used for the elucidation of the text.

In the first place, one method which should be employed, with a view to ascertain the sense of Scripture, is to compare it with itself. It consists of several books which appeared in different ages; but, as the whole was written under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we are sure that there is no real contradiction in it, and that there is a harmony among its parts, which conspire to one end, our instruction in the system of religion. It will, therefore, tend to throw light upon one part, to bring into view other parts which are allied to it. Now this alliance is more or less close. Sometimes different passages of Scripture

agree, not only in treating the same subject, but in expressing it in the same terms. A comparison of these will show the harmony of the sacred writers, but will not contribute to elucidate their meaning. Others discuss the same subject in language somewhat different, enlarging upon certain points, and introducing new circumstances. It is evident that these are of great use, by giving a more complete view of the subject, and serving as a commentary upon the passages which are more concisely expressed. Lastly, there are passages which may be called parallel, not in respect of the language, but of the matter. The same doctrine, or the same duty, is discussed in a variety of words and phrases; and hence, when the different passages are placed together, and attentively considered in their bearings upon the common topic, new light is reflected upon it. What is obscure in one place is explained by what is perspicuous in another, and what is defective is supplied. You perceive now for what reason it has been said that the Bible is its own interpreter; and that it may perform this office in relation to itself, is the design with which some Bibles have been published, with an ample collection of marginal references. But the saying must be understood with certain limitations, for some parts of it are unintelligible without foreign assistance, and in particular, prophecy can be explained only by the event.

In the second place, in studying the Scriptures, it is necessary to attend to their scope or design. By this, I mean the purpose which the sacred writers had in view in the books which they composed, or in particular passages, and it will be best discovered by an attentive and repeated perusal of them. The knowledge of the design of a book will enable us to account for its general structure, and the disposition of the parts, and will serve as a key to the exact meaning of words, the import of phrases, and the connexion of particular passages. The design of the gospels was not to give a complete history of our Saviour, but such a specimen of it as would prove that he is the Son of God, and the Messiah; and this is the reason that they do not all relate the same facts, but one records certain particulars which are omitted in another. The design of the Acts was not to give a full account of the propagation of Christianity, but to show that it was preached first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles; and hence, it says little of any of the apostles but Peter and Paul, of whom the one was the minister of the circumcision, and the other of the uncircumcision. It seems to have been the design of the epistle to the Romans, to give a succinct account of the general system of Christianity, and in particular, to instruct them in the important doctrine of justification by faith, without the works of the law. The design of the epistle of James is different; and unless the difference be attended to, we shall be led into the error of those who have supposed that the two apostles contradict each other, and have either rejected one of the epistles as uncanonical, or in attempting to reconcile them, have corrupted both. Luther called the epistle of James *straminea epistola*, an epistle of straw, because it appeared to him to be opposed to the doctrine of Paul; and others, assuming that James teaches justification before God by works, have vexed and tortured the words of Paul to make him speak in the same strain. The design of James was to refute the error of those who, perverting the doctrine of Paul, rested too much upon faith, and imagined that a man would be justified by it, although he continued to live in his sins. As soon as this difference of design is understood, the two apostles are found to harmonize. As the one speaks of justification before God, and the other of justification before men, there is no discrepance of sentiment, in ascribing the former to faith, and the latter to works.

In the third place, it it necessary to attend carefully to the nature of the composition in different passages of Scripture which is literal or figurative. When the composition is literal, and words are used in their common and familiar sense, nothing is necessary but a thorough acquaintance with the grammar, the vocabulary, and the idioms of the original tongues. But words are frequently employed in a figurative sense, partly from necessity, and partly from choice; and hence, besides a general knowledge of the figures of speech, it is requisite to observe when they do occur, that we may neither call that which is figurative, literal, nor that which is literal, figurative. The Scriptures themselves furnish us with several instances of mistake. When our Lord said to the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," they imagined that he referred to the second temple constructed of stone and timber, whereas he spoke of the temple of his body. At the institution of the sacred supper, he called the bread his body, by a common trope giving the name of the thing signified to the sign, as is evident from the nature of the case, as well as from the use of the same trope in other passages; but papists have founded on his words the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, in defiance of the testimony of our senses, and the plainest dictates of reason. The style of prophecy is highly figurative. We have not only examples of personification, apostrophe, and hyperbole, but metaphor of the boldest kind, representing political revolutions as earthquakes and storms; the fall of monarchs as an eclipse of the celestial luminaries; and the spiritual change in the state of human affairs, which was to be effected by the gospel, as the creation of new heavens and a new earth. Without attention to the meaning of the symbols, prophecy will not be understood; the fulfilment of past predictions cannot be perceived, and those which are yet to be accomplished will excite extravagant expectations, which will not be realized. The language of the parables, which occur both in the Old and in the New Testament, is also figurative, because the terms are intended to convey a sense which they do not bear in their literal import. Considered as a simple narrative of facts, the parable of the Sower might be true in the common acceptation of the terms; but if it were so understood, its design would be lost. The Sower is not a husbandman, but Jesus Christ; the seed is not wheat or barley, but the word of God; and the different kinds of ground are not varieties of soil, but the hearts of different individuals. A parable being a short story in which spiritual things are exhibited under sensible images, it is necessary, in order to the right interpretation of it, that we should keep in view the main design. There is a general truth or moral to be drawn from it; but in doing so, we must beware of minutely explaining every particular, because some particulars are evidently introduced merely to complete the narrative, or to adorn it. It is ridiculous, in the parable of the prodigal, to pretend to tell us what is meant by the fatted calf, and what by the ring which was put on his finger, and the shoes which were put upon his feet; as nothing was intended, but to teach us that the return of a sinner is acceptable to God, and that he is invested with the honours and privileges of a son. It is quite contemptible, in explaining the parable of the good Samaritan, first, to commit the egregious blunder of supposing him to be Christ, and then to explain the two denarii which he gave to the innkeeper, of the active and passive obedience of our Saviour. Nothing can be more wretched than such expositions of Scripture. They may make idiots admire, but they excite the laughter or the disgust of the wise.

In the fourth place, another assistance in understanding the Scriptures, is the analogy of faith, which signifies, that we should explain passages that are obscure

or doubtful, by the general sense of Scripture previously ascertained. When it is thus defined, there appears to be no just objection against this rule of interpretation, and no cause for the ridicule with which it has been treated, and the contempt with which it has been set aside by some authors, and particularly by Dr. Campbell in his Dissertations, who, in more instances than one, has allowed his wit and satire to run faster than his judgment. If it were meant that we should first form a system in our own mind, and then proceed to explain the Scriptures by it, our conduct would be preposterous, and, as he says, we should begin with giving judgment and afterwards examine the proof, employing at the same time all our skill to wrest the evidence in favour of our judgment. But we make no such absurd proposal. We believe, in opposition to all skeptics, whether philosophers or divines, that the sense of Scripture may be certainly known; and having ascertained the general doctrines which are taught in it, we contend that we are authorized to apply them to the elucidation of obscurities, and to interpret in conformity to them such passages as, taken by themselves, do not convey a definite sense. This rule must be admitted with respect to any human composition, the author of which was a man of sound mind and upright intentions. We apply it to the Scriptures, on the principle that the Holy Ghost does not contradict himself, and that there is undoubtedly a perfect harmony among all his declarations. This, then, is the analogy of faith for which we plead. With any other idea of it we have nothing to do; and if some men choose to attack it in a different form, we leave them to amuse themselves with first setting up a man of straw, and then beating him down.

As it is possible in this lecture to give only a superficial sketch, I add, in the last place, that in interpreting the Scriptures, there are external sources from which assistance is to be derived. Chronology and geography have been called the two eyes of history, and must be of great use for understanding the Scriptures, a considerable portion of which consists of historical narrative, and accounts of different countries. They enable us to trace the series, the causes, the connexions, and the consequences of events; they furnish the thread by which we find our way through the mazes of the labyrinth; they reduce to order what would otherwise appear to be a confused mass of particulars. Without the knowledge of profane history, many parts of the Bible would be unintelligible, or would make only an indistinct impression on the mind. In particular, all the prophetical parts would be words without meaning. We could not know whether they were prophetical or not; and for aught that we could tell, they might be the wild ravings of fancy, or descriptions written after the event in the oracular form, for the amusement of the authors, or with a view to make sport of the credulity of others. The evidence arising from prophecy in favour of the inspiration of the Scriptures would be lost as there would be no proof that it had been fulfilled. An acquaintance also with natural history, and with the arts of life, is highly useful, as there is mention made of plants and animals, several of which are unknown to us, but are described by philosophers and travellers; and there are frequent allusions to husbandry, gardening, commerce, and the pastoral life. And this leads me to remark, that no man can understand many passages of Scripture, and explain them satisfactorily to others, without some knowledge of ancient customs and manners. I shall take notice of two or three familiar examples. When Moses says that the Israelites should sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians, and run the risk of being stoned, a common reader must be utterly at a loss to apprehend what he means, till he is informed that heifers, rams, and goats were held sacred by the Egyptians, and that to offer them in sacrifice was accounted a daring act of impiety. Mention is frequently made of going up to the house-top, walking, praying, and conversing upon it. All this must seem strange to a native of this country, who has seen houses only with sloping roofs; but his surprise will cease as soon as he learns, that in Judea the roofs of the houses were flat, and were accessible by steps erected for the purpose. Again, we might wonder that our Lord speaks of putting new wine into new bottles for safety, and not into old ones, which might burst, because from the nature of the bottles which we use, greater danger is to be apprehended from the new, which have not been tried, than from the old, which have stood the test. But we perceive the reason why he prefers the former to the latter, when we are told, that bottles being then made of skins, as they still are in the eastern countries, those which had been often moistened and dried, and exposed to the heat of the sun, were much more apt to give way than such as had been recently made. But I must bring this subject to a conclusion. I intended only to give you a few hints respecting the means to be employed in the study of the Scriptures. There is, however, one thing of which I would remind you, that the literal ought always to be considered as the true and only sense of Scripture, except in those cases in which it is evident that something more is intended. In parables and allegories, we ought not to rest in the letter, but should search out the hidden meaning. In passages, too, which relate to typical persons and events, a double sense must be admitted; and in general, when figurative language is used, we must attend, not to the literal signification of words, but to the ideas which, by a trope, they are used to represent. But in historical narration, in the enunciation of doctrines, and in moral precepts, the grammatical sense alone is to be considered. The practice of spiritualizing the Scriptures, of finding mysteries in the plainest things, which has long prevailed in the church, is a sad proof of the want of judgment and taste. It should never be indulged, although it may excite the admiration of the ignorant; for with whatever appearance of piety it may be clothed, it is a perversion of the word of God, is calculated to expose it to the ridicule of the profane, and instead of edifying, inflates the minds of men with reveries and dreams.

In studying the Scriptures, we should bear in mind, that they are the only standard of religion. As this idea will inspire us with reverence for their authority, so it will excite us to inquire into their meaning with the utmost care. The church of Rome makes tradition the standard of religion as well as the Scriptures, and explains the latter by the former; thus distracting the attention between the word of God and the word of men, and, in fact, giving greater authority to tradition than to the Scriptures. It is, therefore, of as much importance, at least in that church, to know what the fathers have said, as what the prophets and apostles have taught; and accordingly, their writings are much studied by popish divines, and their sentiments are quoted as decisive in matters of faith and practice. Protestants acknowledge the Scriptures alone as the standard of truth. They have drawn up articles or confessions of faith, to which the title of Standards is given; but they are called subordinate standards, and it is always in this light that they should be regarded. The great Protestant principle, that all appeals should be ultimately made to the Bible, is not always, I am afraid, practically maintained. There is apt to grow up in the mind an undue reverence for the standards of a church, which, by being never subjected to revision, seem to be considered as absolutely perfect, and as enacted for all time to come, and in this country have acquired an air of inviolable sanctity by certain transactions of our fathers, which seemed to ratify them, as the law of Moses was ratified by the solemn covenant

between God and the Israelites. Hence there are some persons who think, that they have answered your objections and refuted your opinions, by quoting a passage from the Confession of Faith, and charge you with the most criminal presumption for daring to suggest a doubt of the truth of any part of it. In the same spirit, the papist refers you to the decrees of councils, and the dogmas of the fathers. When the question is, whether a particular opinion is agreeable to the doctrine of the church, the proper appeal is to the standards of the church; but when the question is, whether a particular opinion is true, the appeal ought to be to the Scriptures. I care not, nor should any man care, what the church of England, or the church of Scotland, has determined. My business is with the word of God, which alone is infallible. The supreme judge of all controversies is the Scriptures, or rather the Holy Ghost, speaking in the Scriptures.

It has been a subject of controversy, whether it is lawful to draw inferences from Scripture, and what authority should be assigned to them. It is not easy at first sight to conceive, why there should have been a diversity of sentiment upon a point which seems to admit of no dispute; for nothing is more plain than that, when a proposition is laid down from which certain inferences naturally arise, it is the office of the understanding to draw the conclusions, and to rest in them with equal confidence as in the premises from which they are deduced. This is the mode of procedure of all intelligent creatures, in the matters to which they turn their attention. Human knowledge would be exceedingly circumscribed and imperfect, if our views were strictly confined to facts; and these would be of little use, if we were not permitted to educe from them, observations and maxims for the regulation of our conduct. Had every thing, which it is necessary for us to know, been delivered in express terms in the Scriptures, the bible would have been too voluminous for general use; and besides, such minuteness was not necessary. God does not speak in it to children, but to men, who are capable of reasoning on the common affairs of life, and can use this power in matters of religion. It is remarked by Theodoret concerning some persons in his time, who affirmed that we should receive the simple words of Scripture without endeavouring to ascertain their import, that they overturned all human things, divested men of reason, and converted them into brutes. The objection against deducing consequences from Scripture is made with a design to serve a particular purpose; to protect certain opinions, which are contrary to Scripture, by the plea that the opposite opinions are nowhere affirmed *totidem verbis*. It is a miserable shift, as there is no fundamental error which may not be refuted by the very words of inspiration, without any commentary upon them; but it so far answers their intention, that it leaves them the advantage of concealing their real sentiments, and assuming the appearance of orthodoxy, while they express themselves in the language of Scripture, but secretly affix a meaning to it which is subversive of its obvious import. If you say that Christ is the Son of God, they will assent; but if you proceed to say, that the only-begotten Son of God, his proper Son, must be a partaker of his essence and perfections, they exclaim that they find no proposition so expressed in the bible. The true reason why some cry out so loudly against confessions of faith, is, that although they have learned to use the words of Scripture in any sense which best suits them, they find in confessions the doctrines which they controvert, expressed in terms which can by no artifice be twisted to their purpose, and the collected sense of different passages imbodied in articles, by which their systems of error are confronted and demolished. The denial of the lawfulness of drawing consequences from Scripture goes much farther than its opponents are aware, and would place them and us in the most awkward and ridiculous situation; for it would follow, that we must never write or speak about religion but in the words of inspiration, and that all theological books and all sermons should be discarded; for, of what do they consist but of inferences from Scripture, when they do not merely retail its words, but attempt to explain their meaning?

Before concluding, I would call your attention to the conduct of the church of Rome, in reference to the Scriptures. She has interposed her authority to hinder the study of them, in direct opposition to the express command of our Saviour.* While the council of Trent declared the Vulgate, that is, the Latin translation which had been used from the days of Jerome, to be authentic in all public readings, disputations, preachings, and expositions, it did not absolutely discourage versions into the vernacular tongues, but prescribed such regulations as were calculated to limit the use of them. The following is the sum of the fourth of the Rules concerning Prohibited Books, which were drawn up by certain Fathers appointed by the council for this purpose, and were sanctioned by Pope Pius the Fourth: —"That since it is manifest from experience, that if the Bible be indiscriminately permitted in the vulgar tongue, more injury than benefit will result through the rashness of men, the use of Catholic versions shall be granted, by the advice of the priest or confessor, to those alone who it is understood will not be hurt by the reading of them, but will be advanced in faith and piety." Conformable to this virtual proscription of the sacred writings, are the representations which are given of them by Popish divines, with a view to deter men from any attempt to become better acquainted with them. The Bible has been pronounced to be very obscure, and indeed unintelligible; to have no authority in itself, and were it not for the authority of the church, to be not more credible than Æsop's fables; to be incapable of making men wise unto salvation, and to be calculated rather to lead them astray; to be the cause, or at least the occasion, of all errors and heresies. If this be the true character of the Scriptures, we cannot wonder that the church of Rome, in her great solicitude for the spiritual and eternal welfare of men, should exert all her power to keep them out of their hands, as we would keep edge tools out of the hands of children. After all, the Bible, according to her, is an imperfect book, containing only a part of revelation, the remainder being laid up in the traditions of the church, without which the Bible cannot be understood, and which we are therefore commanded by the Council of Trent to receive, *pari pietatis effectu ac reverentia*, with equal reverence and affection as the writings of the prophets and apostles.

I need not spend time in showing how contrary to the obvious design of revelation, as well as to its express principles, are all endeavours, whether by authority or by argument, to prevent it from becoming the subject of general study. The thing, indeed, is so absurd, that it would never have been proposed or thought of, if there had not been some sinister purpose to accomplish. No man is displeased that others should enjoy the light of the sun, unless he be engaged in some design which it is his interest that they should not see; and in this case, he would wish the gloom of midnight to sit down upon the earth, that he might practise his nefarious deeds with impunity. It is an interest contrary to the Scriptures which has impelled the church of Rome to exert her power to hinder the circulation of them, and to open her mouth in blasphemy against the God of heaven, as if he had delivered to the world, as a rule of faith, a book so obscure that it cannot be understood, and so dangerous that, if the

* John v. 39.

common people meddle with it, it will be at their peril. If that church were convinced that her constitution, and doctrines, and religious rites were conformable to the word of God, we cannot doubt, after what we know of her eager desire to establish a universal dominion, that she would not fail to display everywhere evidence so overpowering. No man will withhold, especially when his claims are controverted, the proofs by which they are substantiated. When the apostate church declaims upon the obscurity of the Scriptures, and the dangerous consequences of putting them into the hands of the people, we seem to hear Milton's Satan telling the sun how much he hates its beams, because they remind him of the splendour from which he has fallen. This is the secret of her opposition to the Scriptures; and although Papists would willingly conceal it from us, they have not been ashamed to speak of it among themselves: "Among all the counsels which we can give at this time," said the bishops met at Bononia, to consult for restoring the dignity of the Roman See to Pope Julius the Third, "we have reserved the most weighty to the last. You must strive with all your might, that as little of the Gospel as possible, especially in the vulgar tongue, may be read in the cities under your jurisdiction; the little which is in the Mass ought to be sufficient, neither should it be permitted to any mortal to read more; for as long as men were contented with that little, all things went well with them, but quite otherwise since more was commonly read. This book, above all others," they add, "has raised the storms and tempests with which we are carried away. And truly, if any man diligently examine it, and then consider the things which are practised in our churches, he will see that they differ very much from one another, and that our doctrine is altogether different from it, and often contrary. These sheets are therefore to be concealed with great caution and diligence, lest we should be involved in greater troubles and tumults."*

The knowledge of the original languages, and of the rules of interpretation, are necessary to enable us to ascertain the meaning of the Scriptures. They are of essential importance to all who are already employed, or hope to be employed, as teachers of the Christian people. A man is despised who engages in a profession for which he is not prepared; but an unqualified minister of religion is not only contemptible but criminal, because he has intruded himself into an office to which he was certainly not called; and through his ignorance and incapacity, incalculable injury may be done to those who are unhappily placed under his care. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, because the people seek the law at his mouth." It would be well for the church, if all ministers and students were endeavouring, by diligence, and humble dependence upon the Divine blessing, to answer the description which Solomon has given of himself: "Moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words; and that which was written was upright, even words of truth."†

But let every one of you consider, that he has a personal interest in the Scriptures, and should study them for his own benefit. He should labour not only to understand their meaning, but to feel their power. They are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ; but what will it avail you, if they are not thus received? By the diligent use of your natural talents, you may preach to the advantage of your hearers, but you will be like a lamp which wastes away as it gives light to others, and then expires. Beware of forgetting your own interests, while you are attending to those of your fellow men. The Bible addresses itself to you in every page; and it is your duty to listen, with serious attention, to its important and varied lessons. A minister of religion ought not to be like an actor, who recites to others tales which do not affect himself, and seeks the applause of his audience by assuming the appearance of passion which he does not feel. That he may possess genuine animation, and that the warmth of his heart may correspond with the fervour of his language, let him be deeply impressed with the alarming and consoling truths which so often come under review. Let him remember that he cannot, without being self condemned, call upon his hearers to believe, while he contents himself with a cold assent; and that in this state of mind, his exhortations must freeze upon his lips, or if they are pronounced with earnestness, it is the earnestness of hypocrisy, for which, if any portion of moral sensibility remains, he must in the hour of reflection despise himself. Happy is he who has the Bible in his head and in his heart! The knowledge of its truths will make him wise, and its inspiring influence will render him eloquent. His discourses will be virtually a detail of his own experience; he will be able to say, "I speak that which I know, and testify that which I believe."

* Consil. de Stabilienda Rom. sede, p. 6.
† Ecclesiastes xii. 9, 10.

LECTURE XIV.

THE DISPENSATION OF RELIGION.

Origin of our Religion—First Promise of a Saviour—Institution of Sacrifices—State of Religion in Patriarchal Times—Institution of the Jewish State—Its Codes—Design of the Ceremonial Law—Character of the Mosaic Dispensation.

About a hundred years ago, a book was published in England, by the celebrated infidel, Dr. Tindal, bearing this title, "Christianity as Old as the Creation;" the object of which was to show that the Gospel is a republication of the law of nature, and that there neither is, nor can be, any revelation distinct from what he calls the internal revelation of that law in the hearts of all mankind. In opposition to this bold and impious assertion, we maintain, with President Forbes in his Thoughts concerning Religion, Natural and Revealed, that Christianity is very near as old as the creation. We deny that it was the primitive religion of mankind; but we are ready to prove, that only a very short time elapsed before it became their religion; or in other words, that substantially the same system of religion which we at present profess, was made known to our first parents, and has been received and acted upon by the people of God in every subsequent age.

As, in consequence of the permanent relations in which man stands to God and his fellow-creatures, the moral law is immutable, and requires the same duties in every new period, and from every successive generation, so to man considered as in a state of guilt and pollution, there could at no time be any essential difference in the mode of intercourse with his Maker, and the only conceivable variety would be in the form. The same views of the divine character were necessary to relieve him from the disquietudes of conscience, and the same promises to encourage his confidence and hope. We are accustomed to give the designation of Christianity to the religion which was published to the world about eighteen hundred years ago, by our blessed Saviour and his apostles, and thus to distinguish it from the preceding revelations; but our design is not to signify that it was a new religion. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, holds the truths taught by both, and acknowledges as her Head the same divine Redeemer who is the subject of their united testimony.

Although God at first created the world in a state of perfection, he has since carried on its affairs by second causes, which produce their effect by a regular but gradual process. The full evolution of the human body, from the seminal principle in the womb of the parent, is the work of years, and so is the growth of plants and trees. Light increases slowly, from the faint dawn in the east, to the full splendour of noonday; and human reason, rising up amidst the instincts of childhood, developes itself by successive steps, till after a long course of experience and discipline, it attains maturity. Religion has advanced to its present state by a similar progress. At first it was like the seed which the husbandman throws into the soil, which, although containing the germ of the future plant, gave no promise to the eye of what it would become; but under the care, and by the renewed influences of Heaven, it has waxed greater and greater, and now it is presented to us in all its luxuriance and beauty.

In this lecture, I shall direct your attention to the dispensation of religion, prior to the coming of Christ.

Immediately after the fall, God made known his gracious design to our first parents indirectly, and in figurative language, while he was pronouncing sentence upon the malignant being who had deceived them. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."* To suppose nothing more to be intended by these words, than that there should be henceforth war between the tribe of serpents and the human race, that serpents should sometimes bite men, and men should sometimes destroy serpents, is to interpret Scripture with as little regard to common sense as to piety, and seems designed to turn it into ridicule. There is no doubt that, although the serpent is mentioned, it was not against it that the curse was directed, but against the invisible agent, who used it as his instrument in the seduction of Eve, and appears to have been the prince of the apostate angels, who, in reference to this transaction, is said to have been a liar and murderer from the beginning; and in allusion to the character which he assumed, is called the old serpent.† The antagonist would be a descendant of the woman, and the nature and effects of the conflict are described in terms accommodated to the circumstances of both. The man would be wounded in the heel; the serpent would be bruised on the head. The heel is most exposed to the bite of a serpent, which creeps upon the ground, particularly when a person is attempting to crush it with his foot; and if the head of a serpent be trodden upon, it will inevitably die. The heel is the human nature of our Saviour, which alone could be injured by Satan, and which he contrived, by means of his agents upon earth, to nail to the cross; the head is the power of Satan over mankind, which our Lord abolished by his death. The event enables us to understand this prediction, and it seems clear in the light of its fulfilment; but how far its meaning was apprehended by our first parents, it is impossible to ascertain. It was unquestionably intelligible in some degree to Satan, as it was evidently intended that he should immediately know how miserably his scheme would terminate for himself; and it may be presumed that it was also, in some degree, intelligible to Adam and his wife. Being pronounced in their hearing, it was designed for their use, to relieve them from their fears, to awaken their hopes, to encourage them to return to their Maker, to lay the foundation of a new and friendly intercourse with him. They learned from it, that notwithstanding their great offence, God would be merciful to them, and would not doom them with their adversary to irremediable destruction. They learned that he would receive them again into favour, as is manifest from the declaration concerning the woman, from which, undoubtedly, the man was not excluded, that he would put enmity between her and the serpent, changing her heart by his grace, and uniting her in friendship with himself. They learned that their deliverance would be effected by one of their own offspring, the Seed of the woman in a peculiar sense, who, although a sufferer in the warfare with their enemy, should obtain the victory, and destroy the empire which he had established over them. From all this it follows, that the gospel was first preached to our progenitors in paradise; and the words which we have considered were the dawn of the dispensation of grace, the first rays of the Sun of righteousness which began to dispel the moral darkness that had overspread the earth.

That the revelation of a Saviour was accompanied with the institution of religious rites, and particularly of sacrifices, may be inferred from the use of them in the service of God. As he afterwards prohibited, in the most express terms, every species of will-worship, and regulated with the greatest minuteness all the forms of religion, it is incredible that our first parents were left to devise a ritual of their own; and particularly, that so important a rite as the offering of sacrifices, which were of indispensable obligation, and served the high purpose of typifying the great redemption, was the fruit of human invention. It is indeed inconceivable, that the mind of man should of itself have contrived sacrifices as the means of propitiating the Deity, because reason can perceive no connexion between the slaying of an animal and the averting of his wrath; and it might rather seem to be a new offence to put an innocent creature to death, because we were doomed to die, and were desirous to make our escape. There is no doubt that our first parents were supernaturally guided to this mode of at once acknowledging their guilt and imploring the mercy of their Maker, with a reference to the future substitution and atonement of the seed of the woman. Some have supposed that the coats of skin, with which God is said to have clothed Adam and Eve, because, by his direction, they used them as garments, were the skins of animals which had been offered on the altar. Be this as it may, we find their two sons, Abel and Cain, presenting their offerings, the one the firstlings of the flock, and the other the fruits of the ground. A remarkable difference in the reception of their oblations is pointed out by the sacred historian, when he says, "the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect;"* and it is thus explained in the epistle to the Hebrews: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice, πλειονα θυσιαν, than Cain."† Much criticism has been employed about these words; but whether we translate them, *more sacrifice, a greater sacrifice*, or *a fuller sacrifice*, the result is the same, that the sacrifice of Abel, being of a propitiatory kind, and presented in the faith of God's mercy through the promised Redeemer, was accepted; while Cain, neglecting to bring such an oblation, and contenting himself with a sacrifice of thanksgiving, met with the doom which every sinner may expect who presumes to draw near to God without an atonement. The faith for which Abel is celebrated, implies that his sacrifice was founded on a divine institution accompanied with a promise of acceptance, and that it bore a typical relation to the great Redeemer, who, by dying, was to restore life and happiness to our guilty race.

The next fact in the history of the primeval religion occurs in the following words. "And to Seth also, there was born a son, and he called his name Enos; then began men to call upon the name of the Lord."‡ There has been considerable discussion respecting the

* Gen. iii. 15. † John viii. 44. Rev. xii. 9.

* Gen. iv. 4. † Heb. xi. 4. ‡ Gen. iv. 26.

meaning of these words, and they have been explained in different, and even opposite senses. It has been supposed by some, that the proper translation is, "Then began men to profane in calling upon the name of the Lord," from which they have inferred, that at this time the practice of idolatry commenced. But although sin was in the world almost from the beginning, and the conduct of Cain is a proof that atrocious deeds were early committed, it is altogether improbable, that while the memory of the creation was fresh, and our first parents were living among their descendants, any of them should have erred so much against the clearest dictates of reason and religion, as to exalt any imaginary being to the throne of their Maker, or to assign to the works of his hands equal honour with himself. It is a confirmation of this reasoning, that although mention is made of the great wickedness of mankind, and of the violence with which the earth was filled, there is not a single hint in the Scriptures which would lead us to think that idolatry was one of the sins of the antediluvian generations. There are two ways in which the words have been understood in reference to the true worshippers of God. "Then began men to be called," or to "call themselves, by the name of the Lord;" that is, in the days of Enos, an open separation took place between the pious and the profane; the former making a public profession of religion in opposition to the latter, who lived without God in the world. They seceded from the ungodly multitude, and formed themselves into societies dedicated to the worship and service of Jehovah. These separatists are the sons of God mentioned in the sacred history, who, in process of time, relaxed their strictness, and lost their purity, by taking for wives the daughters of men, or by intermarriages with the corrupt race amidst which they lived. The other way in which the passage may be read, is adopted by our translators. "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord," but the precise sense which should be affixed to these words is doubtful. To suppose them to mean, that at this time men began to hold public assemblies for the worship of God, is liable to this objection, that it is altogether improbable, that for a period of between two or three centuries, God had been worshipped only by individuals, or by families. Perhaps the words refer to some revival of religion; to some new and more vigorous efforts made by good men for the honour of God, and the more general observance of his institutions. At any rate, it is certain that a new epoch is marked in the history of religion.

The only thing which remains to be noticed prior to the flood, is what is related of Enoch, who was distinguished by his faith and piety, and was honoured with a miraculous testimony of the divine approbation. "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not: for God took him."* Paul explains these words, by informing us, that he was translated to heaven.† This was a personal favour to Enoch, who was exempted from the operation of the general law of mortality; but we have reason to think, that something farther was intended, and that the ultimate design was to give a public testimony to the truth of religion before a sinful and incredulous race. In the antediluvian world, great corruption of manners prevailed; and as this state of things is the consequence of a disbelief of the doctrines of religion, we may conclude, that the principles of impiety were generally entertained. God and eternal things were disregarded; and with the exception of a few whom divine grace preserved pure and faithful, the rest were intent solely upon their gains and their pleasures. At this crisis, God was pleased to translate a good man to heaven, no doubt before competent witnesses, to remind those who were left behind that there is an invisible world, in which the righteous shall be rewarded, and consequently that there is a God who judges in the earth. As this extraordinary termination of his earthly course eminently contributed to uphold the authority and interests of religion, so the time which he spent among men was devoted to the same important purpose. He was a prophet and a preacher of righteousness, who instructed, and comforted, and established the people of God who were his contemporaries, testified against the conduct of the wicked, and forewarned them of the day of vengeance and recompense. "And Enoch also," says Jude, "the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."* This is a plain prediction of the second coming of Christ and its circumstances; and it is worthy of attention, that that event was known and announced in this early age of the world. It is not Moses, but Jude, who informs us that it was delivered by Enoch; and had not the apostle been directed to record this prophecy, we might have doubted whether men were then apprized of the general judgment. One inference may be deduced from it, namely, that we are imperfectly acquainted with the degree of religious knowledge which the antediluvians possessed; and that it was greater than we should have supposed, from the few particulars respecting them which Moses has transmitted to us. It is manifest that more was told to them than was contained in the first promise, or that other revelations were occasionally made to them, of which there is not a trace in the history, and by which their views were directed to the promised Redeemer and the life to come; so that believers among them rose superior to the world by the hope of immortality, and lived as strangers and pilgrims upon earth; and hence we see how rashly some have concluded, that the Jews were ignorant of a future life, because there is no express mention of it in their law.

After the flood, the dispensation of religion was carried on for a considerable time in the same manner as before it. There was no written record of the Divine will; but the faith of the people of God was sustained, and their practice was directed, by such occasional communications as infinite wisdom deemed it proper to make. The person by whom these were enjoyed in the greatest abundance, was Abraham, whom God had called from his native country to sojourn as a stranger in the land which was afterwards to be possessed by his posterity. While the hope was given him of a numerous offspring, and of their future settlement in Canaan, the promise of the Redeemer was repeatedly renewed to him, and he was informed that he should spring from his loins. "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." It would be a perversion of this promise to suppose it simply to mean, that the world should be indebted to his posterity for the knowledge of the true God, which having been preserved among them when it was lost among other nations, should afterwards be communicated to the Gentiles. It relates to an individual who would be the Saviour of the human race, and we are assured by an apostle that the seed is Christ. It may be presumed, that Abraham had a much more distinct and extensive knowledge of his illustrious descendant than these few words would lead us to suppose. Unless explanations had accompanied this and the first promise, both he and our first parents could have formed only a confused and general idea of some great thing to be done for our guilty race, which would have given but little satisfaction to their minds. There is no doubt, that the revelation was more

* Gen. v. 24. † Heb. xi. 5.

* Jude 14, 15.

ample than it is here expressed; so as to impart, not indeed the same views of the Messiah which we have attained by the Gospel, but such apprehensions of his character and work as laid the foundation of peace of conscience, and joy in God, and the exhilarating hope of eternal life. That this is not a mere conjecture, may be inferred from these words of our Lord to the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced," or desired, "to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad;"* words which obviously import, that he was favoured with a discovery of the future redemption, which satisfied his earnest wish, and filled him with ineffable delight.

There is nothing farther to be noticed in the period between the deluge and the exodus, but the repetition of the promise of the Messiah to Isaac and Jacob; by the latter of whom, when in his last years he was blessing his sons, the advent of that illustrious person was foretold in the following terms: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."† As the time drew nearer, the information became more particular. The Redeemer had at first been announced as a man, and afterwards as a descendant of Abraham; but now the tribe, from which he should arise, is pointed out, and the era of his appearance is fixed, namely, while the civil polity of Judah should subsist, and the consequence is represented to be the gathering of the people to him, or the adoption of his religion by the nations of the world.

The time at last arrived when God was to make a change in the dispensation of religion, by establishing it in a single nation and in a particular country, by giving to his people a written rule to guide their faith and practice, and by enacting a variety of laws for the purpose of exercising their obedience, directing their views to the Redeemer and his atonement, and preserving them in a state of separation from the rest of mankind. With this design, when the appointed day was come, four hundred and thirty years after the covenant with Abraham, he delivered his seed, who had increased to a great multitude in Egypt, from the yoke of their oppressors, led them through the Red Sea into the wilderness, where they were detained for forty years, and finally put them in possession of the land which he had promised to their fathers. During the successive steps of this process, a series of miracles was exhibited, of which it was the object to convince the Egyptians, the Canaanites, and the neighbouring nations, of his superiority to the gods whom they worshipped, deeply to impress upon the minds of the Israelites the fundamental truth, that he was Jehovah, the Creator and Governor of the world, and the author of those laws which were delivered to them by Moses his servant, and to assure them that in yielding the obedience which he required, they should be safe and prosperous under his protection.

The religion of the Israelites was virtually the same with the patriarchal religion, in respect not only of the truths to be believed, but also of some of the rites to be performed; but as they were imbodied into a nation and brought into a more perfect state, there was given to them a code of laws, adapted to the circumstances in which they were placed. It was promulgated on Sinai, partly by God himself with an audible voice, and partly by a private communication to Moses, who conveyed to the people his messages and commands. The laws may be divided into three classes, the judicial, the moral, and the ceremonial.

With regard to the first, we may pass them with a brief notice, because they did not properly constitute a part of the religion of the Jews, except so far as they were to be obeyed from respect to the Divine authority, but were merely national laws, enacted like those of any other country by the supreme power for the internal government of the people, regulating marriages, contracts, purchases, and such other matters, as are elsewhere the subjects of human legislation. They respected the Israelites merely as a civil community. They were temporary institutions, that is, being intended for this nation alone, they were to last no longer than it continued as a political body. They are binding upon no other people, except so far as they are founded on the principles of immutable justice; and in such cases the obligation arises not from their having been delivered to the Jews, but from their essential rectitude, their conformity to the nature and relations of things. That part of the code, therefore, which regarded the Jews as a civil society, may be considered as abolished.

The moral law is contained in the ten commandments engraved upon two tables of stone, and was the only part of their religion which was promulgated by God himself with an audible voice. It is the same law which was written upon the heart of man at his creation, and is the rule of righteousness under all dispensations. Its solemn republication at this time was necessary, because the Israelites may be conceived to have lost just notions of morality, during their residence in Egypt, where they did not enjoy the benefit of regular instruction, and were exposed to be corrupted by the maxims and example of an idolatrous people; and at the same time it was the design of God, by whose finger it was recorded, and by whose command it was transcribed into the writings of Moses, to establish a perpetual standard of duty from which there should be no appeal.

But the law, which the design of this Lecture requires us particularly to consider, is the ceremonial, the object of which was twofold, to separate the Israelites from all other nations, and to direct their attention to the great redemption, and the means of its accomplishment.

It was the will of God to make a particular people the depositaries of the true religion, and for a time to leave the rest of mankind without any other means of instruction than their own reason, and some traditionary notices. The rejection of the Gentiles is to be dated from the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, or from their settlement in Canaan. Prior to this period there had been in every nation, good men who feared God and wrought righteousness; and who, guided by the light of revelation, which was universal in the family of Noah, and favoured with the influences of grace, were acceptable to him. But henceforth, "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." No interposition on the part of Heaven was made in their behalf; no prophet was sent to reclaim them from idolatry to the knowledge and worship of the true God; no miracles were wrought to display his power, and confirm the truth of his oracles. It was partly with an intention to maintain this separation that the ceremonial law was given to the Israelites; and that it was well fitted to accomplish this design, is evident from the religious rites which it prescribed, and which were contrary to those of other nations, and from the rules which it laid down with respect to some of the common usages of life. Tacitus has justly described the character and spirit of the Mosaic institutions, when he says, "Moses, quo sibi in posterum gentem firmaret, novos ritus contrariosque ceteris mortalibus indidit. Profana illic omnia, quæ apud nos sacra, rursum concessa apud illos, quæ nobis incesta."* He perceived the studied opposition of the Jewish rites to those of other nations, and regarded it as an expedient for preserving that people distinct and separate. This was, in a particular manner, the design of those laws which related to meats, and pronounced some to

* John viii. 56. † Gen. xlix. 10.

* Hist. lib. v. 4.

be clean, and others to be unclean: "I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people. Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean; and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy unto me; for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine."* The Israelites could not associate with their neighbours on familiar terms, and sit down at table with them, because there was danger of contracting pollution by eating their food. The ultimate intention was to prevent free intercourse with the heathen, by which the Israelites might have been led to join in their idolatrous worship. It was the will of God, that the people should dwell alone, and should not be reckoned among the nations, and that all temptation should be taken away to corrupt the religion which had been committed to their trust.

The other design of the ceremonial law, was to prefigure Christ, and redemption through his blood. Its institutions were typical. A type is a person or thing by which another person or thing is adumbrated. That which corresponds to it, is called the antitype. The latter is considered as future; and in this view, the type partakes of the nature of a prediction. To serve its purpose, it must be instituted by God, who alone can establish the relation; and it is by no means sufficient, that between two distinct persons or events there should be an accidental resemblance. The essence of a type consists, not in its similarity to another object, but in its being divinely appointed to be a representation of it.

That the Mosaic institutions were typical, is a point about which there has been little difference of opinion. Some, indeed, have denied it, and laboured to show that in the New Testament there are only allusions to them, as if the writers had merely taken advantage of a resemblance between the two dispensations, to illustrate the one by the other. The ground of this opinion is not any solid, or even any plausible reason, but a wish to evade the evidence in favour of the atonement of Christ, arising from the vicarious and propitiatory nature of the sacrifices of the law. We detest the disingenuity which resorts to the most unfair means to establish a favourite point, and the impiety which impeaches the veracity and judgment of an apostle. Nothing can be more explicit than the affirmation of Paul, that the ceremonial ordinances were shadows of good things to come; and the professed design of his Epistle to the Hebrews is to illustrate this position by a variety of particulars. The high-priest represented Jesus Christ; the sin-offerings were symbolical of his expiatory oblation on the cross; the aspersions of blood were significant of the application of the virtue of his atonement to the conscience; and the annual entrance into the holy of holies was a figure of his entrance into heaven, in the name of his people, to plead the merit of his death in their behalf, and to procure the enjoyment of spiritual blessings.

A type, I have said, bears a resemblance to the antitype. But however exact the likeness might be, it could not of itself have led the mind to the antitype, which was distant and future, and either altogether unknown or imperfectly understood. Notwithstanding, therefore, the perfection of the Levitical law as an adumbration of good things to come, it would not have served its great purpose, by directing the views of the Israelites to the Messiah, if it had been given alone. It contained the substance of the Gospel; but it was the Gospel in a mystery, the sense of which no human sagacity could have discovered without assistance. Had no light been thrown on its design, it would have appeared a series of unmeaning observances; or it would have suggested false ideas to the Israelites, as if its animal sacrifices were sufficient to atone for their guilt and reconcile them to God, and its external ablutions could purify them from the defilement of sin. But prior to the establishment of this law, the people of God were in possession of information concerning the redemption which was to be effected by the promised Redeemer; and when sacrifices were first appointed, we may presume that men received some general instruction respecting their ulterior design. Whether Moses explained his institutions to the Israelites, we cannot tell, as the history is silent on this subject; but it is certain, that under the legal economy many intimations are given of the future Saviour, and of the new dispensation which it was the purpose of God to introduce. Prophets arose in succession, who admonished the people not to rest in the sacrifices which were required by the law, but to look to him who would put away our sins by the oblation of himself. If he was sometimes described as a mighty conqueror, and his kingdom was portrayed in all the pomp and magnificence of a worldly monarchy, the triumph of his religion being exhibited under these figures; at other times he was held out to view as an humble, lowly person, a sufferer, wounded, bruised, and put to death; a piacular victim, through whom peace with God would be established, and whose blessings would be all of a spiritual nature.

In this manner the Jewish church was instructed, and under this form of administration religion subsisted from the days of Moses to the coming of Christ, a period of fifteen hundred years. To some, the ceremonial system of worship may seem too carnal to have been given by a spiritual Being, and the apparent childishness of its rites may be deemed unworthy of the majesty of God. Viewing it, indeed, in itself, we perceive nothing which might lead us to refer it to a divine origin, and with Tacitus, we might attribute it to the political contrivance of Moses. But when considered in its relation to the future economy which it prefigured, it assumes a new aspect, and affords a striking display of the wisdom of its author. As there were reasons why the Redeemer should not be manifested till the fulness of the time was come, and it was necessary that sinful men should possess some knowledge of him, to encourage them to worship God and hope in his mercy, it was evidently proper that they should be instructed not only by prophecies, the meaning of which could not be distinctly understood prior to their fulfilment, but also by symbols and symbolical actions, which would throw light upon the prophecies, by giving as it were a body and form to the event which they announced. No idea could have been affixed to the declaration that the Messiah would die for the sins of men, if they had not been accustomed to see sacrifices substituted in their room, and slain to avert the anger of God from the offerers. As images and pictures have been called the books of the unlearned, so types were instituted to enable those who could not read, or could not understand, to form some conception of the fundamental truth upon which the religion of sinners depends, the suretiship and propitiatory sufferings of the Seed of the woman.

But all the information which could be derived from typical institutions and unfulfilled prophecies, was limited and indistinct. A general expectation was excited of a Redeemer, who would restore our forfeited happiness, and a vague idea was perhaps entertained of the means by which his benevolent design would be accomplished, but the particulars were unknown till time developed them. Many prophets and righteous men desired to see and hear those things which the disciples witnessed, believing that more glorious discoveries were reserved for their successors. So great, in-

* Lev. xx. 24.—26.

deed, is the difference between the degree of knowledge under the past and the present dispensation, that the former is represented as the night and the latter as the day: "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."* Let it be observed, however, that this is figurative language, and ought not to be too rigidly explained. It is not true that under the legal economy there was absolute darkness; but, so much clearer are the manifestations of divine things which are now made, that the prior revelation seems to be wrapt up in obscurity. The Sun of righteousness has now ascended above the horizon, and diffused his bright and salutary beams.

We may remark also concerning the former dispensation, that it was very burdensome in consequence of the nature and the multiplicity of its injunctions,—a yoke, as Peter says, which the Jews were not able to bear.† The observance of many holidays was enjoined, which caused frequent interruptions of their necessary labours. The laws respecting meats must have required much caution and care in the preparation of their food, and would subject them on many occasions to great inconvenience. They might be polluted, not only by what they ate, but by what they touched, and by other causes over which they had no control; and in such cases, it was necessary to wash their bodies and their garments, and to remain unclean until the evening. When they had committed any sin, it could not be expiated without a sacrifice, and Jerusalem was the only place in which it was lawful to offer it. To Jerusalem, all the males were commanded to repair three times in a year; and as it was situated at a great distance from some parts of the country, many of them must have performed long and fatiguing journeys. The offerings demanded from them were costly, a lamb, a ram, a bullock, or a he-goat; and a single sacrifice would have cost an Israelite more than most Christians are called to give in a year for the support of the simple institutions of the Gospel.

Notwithstanding these disadvantages, the Israelites enjoyed the true religion, and the law was a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ. It is a great error, in comparing the two dispensations, to exalt the one, as some do, at the expense of the other, by representing the Christian as spiritual, and the Jewish as altogether carnal. Let it not be imagined, that when an Israelite had gone through the forms of his religion; when he had offered sacrifices, and performed ablutions, and observed holidays, he had fulfilled all its demands. He who is a Spirit must require the same worship in every age of the world. It was the service of the heart which alone was acceptable to him then, as it is now; the ordinances were carnal, but the intention of them was spiritual; and between the two dispensations this is the difference, that the spirituality of the worship is now more evidently signified, because the multitude of ceremonies is abolished, and only a few simple forms are left to express the devotion of the soul. In the Old Testament, the most exact conformity to the Mosaic ritual is treated as a thing of no value, and indignantly rejected, when not accompanied with pious sentiments, and the practice of holiness.

There is another mistake, against which it is necessary to be on our guard, and the more so, because it may seem, on a superficial view, to be countenanced by Scripture itself, when it describes the times of the Gospel as the dispensation of the Spirit, and may be understood to confine it to that period. The Gospel, indeed, is called "the ministration of the spirit,"‡ and a copious effusion of his influences is mentioned by the prophets as the privilege and glory of the new economy. But we are not to conclude that he was not given before the coming of Christ. Without him, religion would have been a cold and lifeless form; there would have been no faith, no repentance, no love, no holiness, for these, we know, are the fruits of the Spirit. Besides the express testimonies in the Jewish Scriptures to his presence with the people of God under the law, the existence of genuine piety in the hearts of many individuals is a proof that they were the subjects of his gracious operation. The high attainments of some of the ancient saints, the faith of Abraham, which is a pattern to all succeeding generations, the sublime devotion of David, and the patience of Job, demonstrate that they enjoyed no ordinary share of his influences.

After all, the church was in a state of infancy. The dispensation was too imperfect to be final; it was accommodated to the times which then were, and it did not realize all that the people of God were taught to expect. God had provided some better things for us, which we enjoy through the ministry of his Son, by whom he has spoken to us in the last days. Of the Christian dispensation, I shall speak in the next Lecture.

* 1 John ii. 8. † Acts xv. 10. ‡ 2. Cor. iii. 8.

LECTURE XV.

THE DISPENSATION OF RELIGION.

Ministry of John the Baptist—Appearance of Christ—Abrogation of the old Dispensation—Characteristics of the Christian Dispensation: its Author; its Revelations; its Ministers; System of Worship; Advantages and Attainments of its Subjects; its Catholicity.

THE Old Testament closes with the following prediction and command: "Unto you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."* The system of laws and ordinances which God had delivered to his chosen people by the ministry of Moses, was to be carefully observed in all their generations. No change was to be made in it for a long succession of years; and religion was to consist in a close and devout adherence to its institutions. But an event was announced, which would be introductory to a great revolution, the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, the appearance of the Messiah, who would come, not to give the sanction of his authority to the law of Moses, but to establish a new law of superior excellence, and perpetual duration. A messenger woul l precede him to proclaim his advent, by whose ministry the expectations of men would be excited, and they would be prepared to receive the Redeemer himself.

That messenger was John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, who, endowed with the spirit and power of Elijah, appeared on the banks of Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance, and telling the people that there was one coming after him, "the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose, who would baptize them with the holy Ghost, and with fire."† As when great monarchs were to undertake a journey to any part of their dominions, pioneers were sent before them to put the highways in a complete state of repair, that there might be no obstacle to their progress, to level mountains, and to fill up valleys, so the object of the mission of the Baptist was to awaken the Jews to a sense of their sins, to overthrow the vain confidence which they placed in their descent from Abraham, and their external privileges, that, feeling their need of a

* Mal. iv. 2, 4—6. † Luke iii. 16.

spiritual Saviour, they might give him a cordial reception. "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face; he shall prepare the way before thee." Upon the greater part of his hearers, the doctrine of the Baptist made no impression; but the attention of many was directed to the Messiah, and in consequence of the instructions and exhortations of his forerunner, they resorted to him, and became his disciples.

The Baptist held an intermediate place between the Old and the New Dispensation, between the Prophets and the Apostles. He was superior to the Prophets, and inferior to the Apostles. His superiority to the Prophets arose from the near relation in which he stood to our Saviour, whose approach he proclaimed, and from his seeing him and conversing with him; in consequence of which, his views were clearer and more extensive than those of the most distinguished persons who lived at such a distance from the event. But the Apostles enjoyed greater advantages, because they were the familiar associates of the Messiah, hearers of his doctrine, and witnesses of his miracles, and death, and resurrection; and because they received more ample measure of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by whom they were fully instructed in the scheme of redemption. Indeed, so much light is thrown upon the prophecies by their fulfilment, so much more distinctly are the character and work of the Messiah now understood, that the knowledge even of an uninspired Christian exceeds that of the Baptist. "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."*

When John had executed his office for some months, our Lord himself came forth to public view; and having received baptism from the hand of his forerunner, began to preach in Galilee and Judea. With respect to the period of his manifestation we may remark, that it is called το πληρωμα του χρονου, "the fulness of the time;"† an expression which imports, that it was the exact time pointed out by prophecy, and that it was chosen by divine wisdom as the fittest. If it should be asked, why there was so long an interval between the fall and the mission of our Saviour as four thousand years; why he was not sent sooner, and the cumbersome apparatus of the ceremonial institutions superseded? different answers might be returned; and the preference of the actual period might be justified on various grounds: but after the general consideration, that it was so determined by him who sees all things in their connections and consequences, and has reserved the times and the seasons in his own power, it is the most satisfactory answer, that, by this delay, an opportunity was given fully to demonstrate the necessity of his interposition. Had he appeared immediately after the fall, it might have been said, that the case did not require such extraordinary means, that the evil might have been remedied by a less costly expedient, that no time had been given to try what man could do to extricate himself from sin and its effects. But when ages after ages had rolled on, and no relief was found; when the human race, instead of growing wiser, sunk deeper and deeper in ignorance, and crimes multiplied as the world advanced; when philosophy had discovered nothing of any value, and religion had provided no atonement; when even the sacrifices of divine institution had failed to take away the conscience of sin, and the ceremonial law was proved to be only a shadow; a conviction was produced on every reflecting mind, that some more effectual method was necessary to restore sinners to the favour of God; and the mission of Christ was seen to be at once a display of his love, and a demonstration of his wisdom.

There have been different opinions respecting the time which our Lord spent in his public ministry, some reducing it to a year, and others extending it to three years and a half. The first is too short, and cannot be reconciled to the evangelical history. Whatever was its duration, he employed it in preaching the gospel of the kingdom, or the good news of the reign of grace, in performing miracles to attest his mission, and in making preparation for his death, in which its design would be fulfilled. In one view, the old dispensation may be considered as having terminated when his ministry commenced, or rather at the commencement of the ministry of his forerunner; and this seems to be the meaning of the following words: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of heaven is preached, and every man presseth into it."* The law, indeed, had not yet lost its authority, nor were the prophecies fully accomplished; but a new state of things then began, which would issue in the establishment of a new mode of administering religion. In another view, the beginning of the new dispensation may be dated from the death and resurrection of Christ, when the sacrifice and oblation legally ceased, although for reasons which will be afterwards mentioned, they were permitted to continue for a time, and when the Apostles were sent forth to erect a church distinct from that of the Jews, observing new ordinances, and governed by new laws. This change was announced by the prophets, sometimes in highly figurative language, and at other times in plainer terms. It was foretold as the abolition of the old covenant which God had made with the Israelites, and as the making of a new one. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more."† It was predicted as a state of things, under which the Gentiles should be associated in the church with the Jews, should partake of the same spiritual privileges, and should be admitted to the holy offices which had exclusively belonged to the priests and the Levites. "And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow; to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. And I will also take of them for priests, and for Levites, saith the Lord."‡ Once more it is represented under an image which is not uncommon in the prophetical writings, namely, that of a new creation, which implies an exertion of almighty power similar to that by which the universe was produced. "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come unto mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy."‖

* Matth. xi. 11. † Gal. iv. 4.

* Luke xvi. 16. † Jer. xxxi. 31—34.
‡ Is. lxvi. 19. 21. ‖ Is. lxv. 17, 18.

In the Christian dispensation, there are four particulars by which it is characterized; a greater degree of light; a new system of worship; a more abundant effusion of the Spirit; and its universality.

First, under the Christian dispensation, the light is greater, because the Sun of righteousness has arisen upon us, with healing in his wings. One important part of the office of the Messiah, was to make known the will and counsels of God; and how he was qualified for this duty, we learn from these words of Isaiah, which are applied to him in the New Testament. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek."* If it should be asked, what qualification he could need, who, being the Son of God, was possessed of every possible perfection? I answer, that, in the passage quoted, he is spoken of as incarnate, and as receiving in our nature which he had assumed, a more ample measure of gifts and graces than was ever conferred upon the most eminent prophet or apostle. A child may know, although some men seem to have considered, that what is said concerning his unction and the communication of the Spirit, refers to his human nature alone, because it was equally impossible that his Divine nature should receive, as that it should lose any perfection. It was the Messiah who was anointed, but he was anointed in his human nature; as the Messiah died, but suffered death only as a man. God had promised to raise up to his people a prophet from among their brethren, or a prophet who should be one of themselves; and every created nature, angelical or human, whether it subsists by itself, or is mysteriously related to the Deity, derives all from the Creator. Its existence and its endowments emanate from the Source of life and intelligence; its talents and virtues are inspired by that omnipresent and beneficent Being who pervades, and sustains, and animates the natural, and moral, and spiritual world. It was thus, according to the Baptist, that our Saviour was furnished with all necessary knowledge, and fitted to reveal the counsels of his Father to mankind. "He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."†

Our Lord grew in wisdom as well as in stature; but when he entered upon his public ministry, he was fully prepared for all the duties of his office. He understood, in its whole extent, the scheme of redemption, which is the subject of inquiry and profound meditation to angels and men. How pure was the light which irradiated his mind! It not only excluded the slightest error, but gave a full manifestation of truth in its most sublime mysteries and most minute details; so that the gospel preached by himself and by the Apostles with his assistance, is a system in which nothing is wanting to perfect the knowledge, and support the faith, and promote the consolation of the church in its militant state, and discoveries are made which intelligences of the highest order admire, and those who are savingly enlightened prize above all the wisdom of the world. To him the most obscure subjects were clear, the most profound were of easy apprehension, the most magnificent and awful were familiar, so that he spoke of them with all the calmness which we feel in talking of common objects, and the daily occurrences of life. That his mind was richly furnished, we learn from many circumstances in his history. When a question was proposed, he was always ready to return an appropriate answer; when an objection was started, it was repelled by a few words in reply; when information was humbly asked, it was immediately given. Ideas and words were at command; he could discourse upon any subject without premeditation; and from his lips there flowed, without an effort, a stream of heavenly eloquence, which delighted his friends and confounded his enemies. "Never man spake like this man."* This is the Wisdom of God; this is the Teacher in comparison of whom philosophers are fools, and the ancient prophets were children. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."†

In the preceding lecture, something was said concerning the obscurity of the former dispensation. To the increasing clearness of revelation, we may apply the words of Isaiah: "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days."‡ The discoveries of divine things were gradual and progressive. We must suppose revelation in every age to have been sufficient to guide men into the way of salvation, or it would have been given in vain. Under the Mosaic economy, it was clearer than under the patriarchal; but the law and the writings of the prophets must yield in perspicuity and fulness to the gospel of Christ. Typical institutions, as we have seen, were delineations, more or less distinct, of future transactions and events; but it requires little reflection to perceive, that in themselves they could convey no information, and that their significance depended solely upon the explanation which accompanied them. This was, in part at least, given by prophecy; but however plain particular predictions may now appear to us, they did not afford an equal degree of light in ancient times; and those who then lived must have felt the same difficulty in discovering their meaning, which we experience in the interpretation of prophecies which are not yet fulfilled. How little we know of them, it is unnecessary to say. But now the means of instruction are different; the events prefigured by the institutions of the law have been accomplished; prophecy has been turned into history; the Messiah is not exhibited under the vague notion of a mighty deliverer, but as the incarnate Son of God, who was born in Bethlehem, and died on Calvary; and the spiritual nature of his salvation is distinctly understood. The views of the untutored Christian, who reads his Bible with humble prayer for divine teaching, are much more enlarged than those of the most eminent Jewish sages. In consequence of the greater clearness and fulness of the revelation, the abundance of the means of instruction, the facility of access to them, and the mission of the Spirit, of which we shall afterwards speak, the prediction is now fulfilled, "they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they all shall know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them."‖

When we speak of the perfection of the Christian revelation, we must be understood to refer to it, as completed by the ministry of the apostles. The whole is the revelation of Christ, because it was delivered either by himself in person, or by others whom he had commissioned and inspired. It is the word "which began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."§ During his lifetime upon earth, he announced himself as the Messiah, and preached the gospel in Judea and Galilee; but even to his own disciples, to whom it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, he did not make a full disclosure of the counsels of his Father. He adapted his instruction to the time and to their capacity, and reserved much to be communicated by the Holy Ghost, whom he would send after he had ascended to heaven. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."¶ He is commonly supposed to refer to the change which he intended to make in the constitution of the church, for which they were not prepared while their Jewish prejudices continued; but I

* Is. lxi. 1. Luke iv. 18. † John iii. 34.

* John vii. 46. † John i. 18. ‡ Is. xxx. 26.
‖ Jer. xxxi. 34. § Heb. ii. 3. ¶ John xvi. 12.

apprehend that he meant also the nature of his salvation, of which they entertained erroneous notions, which nothing would correct but his death and resurrection, and the coming of the Spirit to enable them to understand the true meaning of the prophecies. The revelation which God has given to the church as the rule of faith and obedience, is contained in the gospels and the epistles. It is a most unfounded distinction which some make between these writings, when they ascribe greater authority and importance to the former, as if our ideas of christianity were to be derived exclusively from them; and there is not the slightest pretext for it, unless it could be proved that the gospels were inspired, but the epistles are only human compositions. The truth is, that those who insist upon this distinction, call in question the inspiration of both Apostles and Evangelists; and, assuming a right to themselves to determine the comparative merits of the different portions of the New Testament, they wish to lower the authority of the epistles, because they teach so clearly the doctrines which they are unwilling to admit, among which the vicarious death and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ hold a prominent place. Paul is particularly obnoxious to them; and in a bold tone of impiety, he has been charged with mysticism, false reasoning, and inextricable confusion. The New Testament is a whole: and while the gospels relate the history, and discourses, and miracles of our Saviour, the epistles unfold, under the guidance of the Spirit, the nature of the religion which he died to establish.

The revelation of Jesus Christ being perfect, is consequently final; nothing will be added to it, for nothing is wanting to its integrity. It is the only plan according to which God will ever deal with the human race. Moses foretold a prophet who should arise after him, and commanded the people to hear him; but Christ gave no intimation of any successor. The Spirit would come, but he would come in his name, to take of his things, and show them to his followers.

The second particular, which characterizes the new dispensation, is the introduction of a new system of worship. "The priesthood being changed," as Paul observes, "there is made of necessity a change also of the law."* The ceremonial law was connected with the ministry of Aaron and his sons, and prescribed the mode in which they were to conduct the service of the sanctuary; but as soon as they were superseded by a new priest, it became obsolete, and circumstances demanded a different ritual. The very design of the ceremonial law is a proof, that although it was sometimes spoken of as a statute for ever, nothing more could be intended than that it was to last till the advent of the Messiah; and that then, like every other thing which has fulfilled its purpose, it would be abolished. As a shadow it was of no value to those who possessed the substance; as a notification of good things to come, had it been retained in the worship of God, it would have proclaimed a falsehood, signifying that the events predicted were still to be expected, although they had been fully accomplished. As soon as our Saviour died upon the cross, the sacrifice and oblation legally ceased; the temple of Jerusalem was no longer the habitation of God; the priests had no right to minister in it; the covenant of peculiarity was disannulled, and the privileges of the people of God were extended to men of every nation under heaven. The temple, indeed, stood almost for forty years, and the priests performed the service after the usual manner; but the sanctity of the place, and of the ministrations, had passed away. God did not any more require the fat of rams and sacrifices of fed beasts; a sacrifice of a different kind had been offered without the gates of the city, in which he had smelled a sweet savour of rest. He therefore rejected the splendid apparatus by which it had been prefigured, and the hopes of men had been directed to it. But he delayed for some time the visible abrogation of the ceremonial law, which could not be effected but by the dissolution of the Jewish state, in order that an offer of salvation might first be made to the Jews in their national capacity, and that, before their dispersion, such of the elect as were among them might be gathered into the Christian church.

Under the new dispensation, the mode of service is entirely changed. There is now no magnificent temple appointed to be the seat of worship, to which men are required to repair at stated seasons from their distant dwellings; but in every place they are commanded to worship the Father. There is now no particular family who alone are authorized to minister in the sanctuary, and by whom the oblations of the people must be presented, that they may be acceptable. God chooses his servants from every class of society, and gives a commission to those, whom he has called by his providence and grace, whatever may be their parentage and connections, to dispense the ordinances of religion. There are now no sacrifices of the flock and the herd, nor the smoke of incense ascending from the censers of the priests; the only oblations are those of prayer and praise, and of a devout and holy heart. The new ritual is distinguished by its simplicity, and contains little that is addressed to the senses; there is no sensible representation of things to come, and we have only in the sacred Supper, a memorial of the past, intended to recall and to impress upon the mind, the great facts and truths of Christianity. It is therefore spiritual worship that is enjoined under the gospel; not, as I remarked in the last lecture, that under the Jewish economy, carnal worship only was required, but that the spirituality is now more manifest, as the multitude of ceremonies is abolished, and divine things are brought, if I may speak so, into closer contact with the mind. Except in the sacraments, which are symbolical institutions, without any gorgeous display, however, any imposing ceremonies to rivet the attention upon the external rite, there is nothing to attract the eye; the ear only is addressed in the words of truth and soberness, and men are called upon to present to God the homage of humble faith and fervent love.

You will perceive that I refer to the system of worship which is found in the New Testament, and was practised in the apostolic age. It soon, however, underwent a change, and by one addition after another, became as pompous as the Jewish, and acquired a near resemblance to the ritual of Paganism. From an ill-judged intention to recommend Christianity to the heathens, the ceremonies to which they were accustomed were adopted, till the simplicity of the primitive times was lost amidst a mass of superstition, and idolatry profaned the temple of God. In this corrupt and spurious form, religion is still exhibited in the church of Rome. Although the Reformation restored the purity of doctrine, circumstances prevented in some places a return to the original order and discipline of the church; and besides the form of their government, which appears to us to be unscriptural, we find in certain Protestant societies rites of which there is no vestige in the New Testament; as kneeling at the sacrament, the sign of the cross in baptism, bowing at the name of Jesus, and the observance of holidays. The simplicity of our worship is a subject of censure and ridicule to them as well as to the followers of antichrist, and both reproach us with having made religion too naked and too spiritual for human nature, which requires to be excited through the medium of the senses. But in accusing us, they accuse the Author of our religion, to whose word we appeal, and from reverence for whom we reject these superstitious additions. Superstitious we justly call them, because this epithet is

* Heb. vii. 12.

properly applied to the inventions of men in the service of God; and we reject them, because we know that he guards his own institutions with jealous care, and is offended at the presumption which deteriorates, under the pretext of improving them.

A third particular which distinguishes the Christian dispensation, is a more abundant communication of heavenly influences. I observed in the last lecture, that it would be a very great error to suppose that the Spirit was not given prior to the coming of Christ, because there could in this case have been no genuine religion, no acceptable worship,—faith, and repentance, and holiness, which are essential to it, being the effects of his operations on the soul; and the Jews might as safely have wanted an external revelation, as have been denied the supernatural grace by which only they could be enabled to understand and believe it. We hear Wisdom saying, in the days of Solomon, and to sinners of that age, "Behold, I pour out my Spirit upon you." But there were promises of another and a more copious effusion at a future period, or in the last days, which means the times of the gospel. It may be supposed, indeed, that these promises refer to miraculous gifts, which were liberally communicated in the apostolic age; and that some of them may be so explained, is evident from the application of the following prophecy of Joel, to the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance: "It shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants, and on my hand-maidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy."* But it is impossible to understand, in this limited sense, all those passages of Scripture which speak of heavenly influences falling in the days of the Messiah as rain and dew on the grass, breaking forth as streams and rivers in the wilderness, and flowing through barren land to convert it into a fruitful field. They are rightly interpreted of those ordinary operations of grace, by which men are endowed with holy dispositions, and rendered active in the service of God. That they foretell the enjoyment of a more ample measure of grace, is evident not only from the terms in which they are expressed, but from many specific declarations in the Christian Scriptures, in which we are informed that the Holy Ghost was not given while Jesus was not glorified; that the great promise which he made to his disciples to comfort them in the view of his departure, was the mission of the Spirit; that on his ascension he received him from his Father, and then poured him out on his disciples; and that the gospel is more glorious than the law, because it is the ministration of the Spirit. "If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?"† It is imported in this description of the new economy, that the Spirit is given in greater abundance than under any former dispensation.

If we take into the account the superior clearness of the Christian revelation, and the more liberal communication of heavenly influences, is it not a natural inference, that as the privileges and advantages of the people of God are now greater, their attainments also are higher? Considered in a collective capacity, the Jews will not bear a comparison with Christians; the Scripture speaks of the former as children, and of the latter as men. From the difference of their circumstances, there must be a degree of knowledge, and consequently of faith and holiness, among Christians, which could not be expected among the Jews. It may be objected, that of the ancient saints some rose to great eminence in piety, and are proposed to us as examples, and that they are models which we may faintly imitate, but cannot hope to equal. We acknowledge their excellence, we admire their virtues, but we deny that it is impossible to rise to their level, and know of no ground on which such an idea should be entertained. It is a mere prejudice, which will not bear to be canvassed. I have no doubt that they have been often equalled, and I will venture to add, have perhaps been excelled by not a few in the Christian church. Why should it seem incredible that the holiness of many a believer, who had a nobler example before his eyes than that of Abraham, or Job, or David, the perfect example of our Lord Jesus Christ; who enjoyed clearer discoveries of life and immortality, and was animated by the spirit of liberty and love; why should it seem incredible that the holiness of many a believer, thus advantageously situated, has even surpassed the holiness of patriarchs and prophets, been less mingled with the infirmities of the flesh, and less sullied with stains and blemishes? Have the superior privileges of the present dispensation been bestowed in vain? If Christians behold the glory of the Lord with uncovered face, do they attain no higher degree of conformity to his image than those by whom it was dimly seen through a veil? While they have gained so much in knowledge, have they gained nothing in purity, which is the end of knowledge? Whatever opinion may be formed with respect to individuals of former times, it is unquestionable that Christians in general claim the pre-eminence above those who preceded them. The spirit of the law was a spirit of bondage; but the Spirit of the Gospel is a spirit of liberty, elevating the faith of the people of God, inflaming their love, brightening their hopes, and powerfully but delightfully impelling them forward to perfection. The days of the Messiah are come, in which it was foretold that the righteous should flourish, and abundance of peace should be enjoyed.

The last particular which characterizes the new dispensation, is its universality, of which frequent notices were given in ancient prophecy; as when it was foretold, that "from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, the name of God should be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense should be offered, and a pure offering;" that "his dominion should be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth;" that "all kings should fall down before him, and all nations should serve him;" and that "men should be blessed in him, and all nations should call him blessed."* In the fifty-sixth chapter of Isaiah, the comprehension in the dispensation of grace, of those who had hitherto been excluded from it, is described in language suited to that age, and by images which were then familiar. To the "sons of the stranger," or to the Gentiles, who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, it is announced, that "God would bring them to his holy mountain, and make them joyful in his house of prayer." There is an evident allusion to the mountain or elevated ground on which the temple was erected, and to the temple itself, in which the solemn services of the ancient worship were performed, and which, as we learn from the words of Solomon at its dedication, was in particular intended to be a place in which supplications should be presented to God. It is implied in the promise "to bring the sons of the stranger to his holy mountain, and make them joyful in his house of prayer," that he would call them to the knowledge of salva-

* Joel ii. 28. Acts ii. 17, 18. † 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8.

* Mal. i. 11. Zech. ix. 10. Ps. lxxii. 11, 17.

tion by the gospel, and confer upon them all the privileges of the new dispensation: "Then their burnt-offerings and sacrifices would be accepted on his altar." Such sacrifices as were enjoined by the law of Moses, would no longer be offered; but by this figure, which it was so natural to a Jew to employ, the worship of the Christian church is described. The time would then be, when "neither in Jerusalem nor in Mount Gerizzim men should worship the Father, but the true worshippers should worship him in spirit and in truth."*

It was the design of God, who had long distinguished the seed of the patriarchs as his peculiar people, to extend his favour to other nations. It is in reference to the universality of the new dispensation, that he is said to have loved the world, and John calls Christ "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world;"† meaning, not every individual from the beginning to the end of time, but the human race in general, as distinguished from the Jews, to whom divine mercy had been hitherto confined, and for whom exclusively the ancient sacrifices were offered. The commission given to the apostles was unlimited, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;"‡ and the apostles acted upon it, to the great displeasure of many of their countrymen, who, not entering into the benevolent views of prophecy, wished to continue the monopoly of the gifts of heaven which they had enjoyed for ages.

It is evident, from the nature of the former dispensation, that it was intended solely for a particular people. As the obvious design of some of its institutions was to prevent them from associating with other nations, so its system of worship was not practicable but in a country of limited extent. There was only one altar on which sacrifices could be offered; and there were three annual festivals at which all the males were commanded to appear in the capital, and were therefore supposed to be living within a reasonable distance. These things are changed under the Christian economy. There are now no sacred places to which it is necessary to repair, because in them alone God is to be found; but his people may assemble any where to serve him, and their prayers and praises are equally acceptable to him in the open air as in a magnificent building.

Thus the church is opened to all the families of the human race. The distinction of circumcised and uncircumcised is abolished. They are no more twain, but "one new man in Christ, who has broken down the middle wall of partition, and made peace by the blood of his cross." It is the glory of Christianity, that it has united those who were long and, in appearance, for ever separated, and that, by its influence, many nations have been turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven. The establishment of the religion of the Messiah in a single nation would not have been an adequate reward of his humiliation and sufferings, something greater was promised to him, and something greater has in part been accomplished. "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."‖

As the new dispensation is universal in intention, no part of the human race being excepted in the apostolic commission, so we believe that it will be universal in fact. However improbable it may seem that the whole world should be christianized, we know that God is able to perform what he has promised. The great revolution commenced immediately after our Saviour's ascension; and although for ages it was stationary, or rather retrograde, it has been advancing since the era of the Reformation, and is going on in our days with renovated vigour. A future generation will witness the rapidity of its progress; and long before the end of time, "the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." Christianity will gain a complete triumph over all false religions; and the visible kingdom of Satan will be destroyed, or reduced within narrow limits, during the happy period when, in the figurative language of the Apocalypse, "he shall be bound."

Here we close our survey of the dispensation of religion. It will be commensurate with time, and "then cometh the end, when Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all."*

* John iv. 21. 23.
† 1 John ii. 2.
‡ Mark xvi. 15.
‖ Is. xlix. 6.

INTRODUCTION

TO THE

DOCTRINES OF THEOLOGY.

I now proceed to enquire into the contents of the Sacred Records, or to give in detail a summary account of the religion taught in the Old and New Testament. Of its doctrines, some are discoverable, or at least demonstrable by reason, and others are matters of pure revelation, truths which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. To the former class belong what are called the doctrines of Natural Religion; the existence and perfections of God, providence, the rules of duty, and a future state of rewards and punishments. Without inquiring what knowledge of these articles may be acquired by the unassisted efforts of the human mind, with the Scriptures in our hands, it is our wisdom to consider them as they are there exhibited with far superior evidence and authority. The doctrines of pure revelation are those which relate to the scheme of redemption, which, being founded on a free act of the Divine will, and on a new state of things superinduced upon the primitive arrangement, is necessarily placed beyond the sphere of human speculation.

The natural order requires that we should begin with God, his attributes, the distinctions in his essence, with his immanent acts, or the purposes which he formed in himself while he existed alone. From these, we proceed to his transitive acts, or his external operations; and here a wide field opens to our view. We see the universe rising out of nothing at his command, and arranged in admirable order by his wisdom; and we see man occupying the chief place in this world, adorned with the image of his Maker, and happy in the enjoyment of his favour. But the scene is suddenly changed, and man, fallen from his high estate, appears degraded, miserable, and pursued by the vengeance of his Creator. From this melancholy spectacle, our attention is summoned to the contemplation of that wonderful expedient by which he is recovered from guilt, and reinstated in happiness; and here it is necessary to consider the original plan, the person appointed to execute it, the means by which he has effected his design, and the benefits resulting from it, which embrace a history of the proceedings of Divine grace, from its first exercise to the sinner to the completion of its work in the perfection of the heavenly state. This is only a general sketch, and does not comprehend a great variety of particulars which are connected with the main subject, and hold an important place in the system. Let us humbly pray that the Divine Spirit may lead us into all the truth; and that while our understandings are enlightened, our hearts may feel the holy emotions which the diversified

* 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.

views of the Divine character and conduct are calculated to excite. And let us not forget that it is life eternal, spiritually to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

LECTURE XVI.

ON GOD.

His Existence—Belief of it universal—Dr. Clarke's argument *a priori*: its fallacy—Idea of God—Argument for his Being founded on the idea of Him; estimate of its force—Argument from the existence of a material Universe—Argument from the marks of Design in the Universe.

The primary article of Natural and Revealed Religion is the existence of God. If there is such a being, he is the proper object of the reverence, adoration, thanksgiving, and confidence of his intelligent creatures, and of all the other exercises and duties which are implied in the notion of religion. If there is no such Being, men have nothing to hope or to fear beyond the passing events of time, are subject to no law but that of blind and stern necessity, and can rationally propose no higher end, during their fugitive existence, than to take care of themselves, and secure their happiness by every expedient in their power. Virtue and vice are words without meaning, and the only foundation of a distinction of actions is prudence, or a selfish regard to their present interests, which are paramount to beings who know that they shall soon cease to think and feel.

The belief of the existence of God may be said to be natural to man. Were the reason of a human being matured, it may be presumed, that on contemplating the objects around him, he would be led to the conclusion that there is an intelligent Power which created the universe, or at least sustains and governs it; and this idea seems to be favoured by the words of an inspired writer, that "the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made."* But as this point has been disputed, we may affirm, that the notion of a First Cause, the Author of life, and motion, and order, is so agreeable to the dictates of reason, and so exactly accords with the appearances of nature, that as soon as it is proposed, it will meet with the cordial assent of every person who is not prejudiced. Hence it may be deemed unnecessary to enter upon a proof of the existence of God; and to some it may appear to be presumptuous and irreverent, because it seems, in the first instance, to call in question a truth of which it is impiety to doubt. But there are two considerations which justify our procedure.

Let it be remarked, that although men, with a very few exceptions, have in all ages admitted the existence of God, yet many have paid little attention to the subject, and having received it upon authority, without exercising their own thoughts, would be much perplexed if they were called to give a reason of their faith. They may be regarded as children in religion, who require to be taught to read the characters of their Maker's glory, which are stamped upon his works; and those upon whom the office of teaching them devolves, should be previously furnished with the requisite knowledge. Besides, a review of the argument may be eminently useful to such as are already convinced. It is impossible that a truth so important and sublime, on which the hopes and fears, the duty and the happiness of mankind are suspended, can occupy their attention too much, or be too deeply impressed upon their minds. We have all to lament that the impression is so faint, and the obvious remedy for this evil, is frequent and attentive meditation on the signatures of the power and majesty of the Divine Being with which we are surrounded. I may add, that however firm our belief may at present be, we cannot tell to what trials it may be exposed, and with what objections it may be assailed. Some of the most devout men whom the world ever saw, have complained that there were moments when they were disturbed with doubts respecting not only the dispensation of providence, but the perfections and the existence of God.

In ancient times, certain Pagans were stigmatised as atheists; justly in some cases, but in others it may be questioned whether the charge was not founded on their disbelief of the popular systems of religion. Lord Bacon expresses himself as if he doubted whether any man could be really an atheist. "The Scripture saith, 'the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.' It is not said, the fool hath thought in his heart, so as he rather saith it by rote to himself, as that he would have, than that he can thoroughly believe it, or be persuaded of it. For none deny there is a God, but those for whom it maketh there were no God. It appeareth in nothing more, that atheism is rather in the lip than in the heart of men, than by this; that atheists will ever be talking of that their opinion as if they fainted in it within themselves, and would be glad to be strengthened by the consent of others."* It is certain, however, that atheism has been avowed, and in no period more openly than in the present age, when the spirit of impiety has gone forth, and is labouring by the arts of sophistry, to persuade men to throw away their Bibles and their reason, and with the discipline, to renounce the hopes, of religion. Modern philosophy pretends to demonstrate, that there is no intelligent Being who presides over nature, no Lawgiver whom we are bound to obey, no Judge who will call us to an account; in short, that the idea of a God, wise, righteous, and holy, is a tale of the nursery, a dream of superstition. Whatever misgivings of mind professed atheists may experience, whatever suspicions of their own reasonings may at times check their confidence, their public dissent from the general opinion on this momentous subject, calls upon us to be prepared to encounter their arguments, and to secure the foundation of our faith.

The existence of God has been proved by metaphysical arguments, which it requires acuteness of intellect and close attention to understand, and which are therefore useless to the greater part of men; and by arguments of a simpler kind, adapted to common capacities, and founded upon the things which are obvious to our senses. When the celebrated Mr. Whiston was conversing with Dr. Clarke about his Discourse concerning the being and attributes of God, pointing to a nettle, he told him that that weed furnished more satisfactory evidence than all his abstruse reasoning; to which the Doctor answered, that it was true, but that since the adversaries of religion employed metaphysics against it, it was necessary to repel them with their own weapons.

In demonstrating this fundamental truth, recourse may be had to the argument *a priori*, or to the argument *a posteriori*. The argument *a posteriori* infers the cause from the effect, and proves the existence of a Creator from the works of creation. It is an ascending process, by which we rise from what is seen to what is unseen, from things to their first principle. The argument *a priori* infers the effect from the cause, and consequently supposes something to exist before that, the existence of which is deduced from it. Hence it should seem that this argument can have no place in a demonstration of the existence of God, who preceded all other beings, and is the cause of every thing which exists. To this objection it has been replied, "that though no thing nor being can be prior to that Being,

* Rom. i. 20.

* Bacon's Essays. Of Atheism.

which is the First Cause and Original of all things; yet there must be in nature a ground or reason, a permanent ground or reason, of the existence of the First Cause; otherwise its existence would be owing to, or depend upon, mere chance." "The existence, therefore, of the First Cause is necessary; necessary absolutely and in itself. And therefore, that necessity is *a priori*, and in the order of nature, the ground or reason of its existence."* But although it is Dr. Clarke who reasons in this manner, I suspect that we cannot form any distinct conception of his meaning. Necessity is an abstract idea, and when applied to the present subject, can only signify, that there *must* be a First Cause. But how do we come by this notion? It is by profound meditation upon the nature of necessity, and does it hence appear, as an unavoidable inference, that a First Cause must exist? This indeed would be the argument *a priori*; but it is not in this way that we arrive at the conclusion. Our belief of a First Cause is founded on the fact that other beings exist, who could not have made themselves, nor have existed in an eternal succession, as we shall afterwards see, and must, therefore, have been created by a Being who existed without a cause. But this is the argument *a posteriori*. It is by this argument that we rise to the knowledge of the uncaused existence of the Author of the universe, and not by abstract speculations on necessity. We should never have known that he exists, but from our own existence and that of other beings around us; and as in this way we ascertain that he does and must exist, it seems absurd to talk of proving his existence *a priori*. Whatever use may be made of this argument to prove his perfections, it cannot be employed in proof of his being. Dr. Clarke himself acknowledges, that "the argument *a posteriori* is by far the most generally useful argument, most easy to be understood, and in some degree suited to all capacities; and, therefore, it ought always to be distinctly insisted on."†

When we profess to demonstrate the existence of God, we speak of a Being, underived, independent, immutable, and possessed of every possible perfection. It is evident that in the idea of God every perfection is included, because if one or more were wanting, we could conceive another Being who possessed them all, and that other would be God. We therefore ascribe to him every excellence, intellectual and moral, not only power but wisdom, not only goodness but purity. These perfections subsist in the highest possible degree. If they were subject to any limitation, there might be a Being who possessed them without limitation; and to him, as soon as he was known, it would be our duty to transfer the homage which we had hitherto paid to another, whom we now found to be inferior to him. In short, God is a Being to whom the designation of Optimus Maximus, with which the heathens dignified him under the name of Jupiter, justly belongs. He is the Greatest and the Best, incomprehensible to finite minds, of whom we cannot form an idea but by uniting every conceivable excellence in one assemblage, and supposing them to extend beyond the highest attainments of the most exalted creatures, and the utmost reach of the most enlarged understanding.

I now proceed to lay before you the arguments by which the existence of God is evinced.

1. An argument which has been frequently advanced by metaphysical writers, is founded on the idea of God. As it is very abstruse, and I am not sure that I distinctly apprehend it, I shall give you a statement of it, nearly in the words of Bishop Stillingfleet, in whose Origines Sacræ,‡ it is fully detailed. He begins with observing, that such things are contained in the idea of God, as necessarily imply his existence. The force of the argument lies in this, that what we clearly and distinctly perceive to belong to the nature and essence of a thing, may be with truth affirmed of the thing itself; as, if I clearly perceive that to be an animal doth belong to the nature of man, I may with truth affirm that man is a living creature; if I find it demonstrably true, that a triangle has three angles equal to two right ones, I may truly affirm it of any triangle. But now we assume, that upon the most exact search and inquiry, I clearly perceive that necessary existence doth immutably belong to the nature of God, therefore I may with as much truth affirm, that God exists, as that man is a living creature, or a triangle hath three angles equal to two right ones.

In order to manifest more clearly the force of this argument, in which some kind of sophism may be suspected, he proceeds to observe, in the first place, that the greatest evidence we can have of the truth of a thing, is a clear and distinct perception of it in our minds. When we speak of clear and distinct perceptions, we suppose the mind to proceed upon evident principles of reason, or to have such notions of things, which, as far as we can perceive by the light of reason, do agree with the natures of the things which we apprehend; if in such things then there be no ground of certainty, it is as much as to say that our faculties are to no purpose, which highly reflects either upon God or nature. In the second place, we have clear and distinct perception that necessity of existence doth belong to the nature of God. We are to consider the vast difference which there is in our notion of the nature of God, and of the nature of any other being. In all other beings, I grant we may abstract essence and existence from each other; now, if I can make it appear that there is evident reason, *ex parte rei*,* why I cannot do it in the notion of God, then it will be more plain that necessity of existence doth immutably belong to his nature. It is manifest to our reason, that in all other beings of which we apprehend the natures, nothing else can be implied in the natures of them beyond the bare possibility of existence, no, although the things which we do apprehend do really exist, because, in forming an idea of a thing, we abstract from it every thing which is not implied in the very nature of the thing; now existence being only contingent and possible as to any other being, it cannot be any ingredient of its idea, because it doth not belong to its essence; for we may fully apprehend the nature of the thing without attributing existence to it. But now, in our conception of a Being absolutely perfect, bare possibility or contingency of existence speaks a direct repugnancy to the idea of him; for how can we conceive that Being absolutely perfect, which may want that which gives life to all other perfections, namely, existence? The only scruple in this case is, whether this necessary existence doth really belong to that Being whose idea it is, or is only a mode of our conception in apprehending God. Here we have no rule so certain and evident as this, that in those things which are merely joined together by the act of the mind, the understanding can abstract them, and divide them in its conceptions from each other; but in such things as cannot be divided without altering the essence of the subject to which they are ascribed, it is a certain evidence that they were not conjoined by the mere act of the mind, but do immutably belong to the natures of the things themselves. The reasons which make us attribute bare possibility of existence to any being, are taken away when we conceive a Being absolutely perfect, for then existence is implied among the number of perfections, and this Being is independent upon all others, and infinitely powerful, so that nothing can

* Clarke's Discourse concerning the being and attributes of God, Edit. 10th, p. 498. Answer to Seventh Letter.
† Ibid. p. 499. ‡ Book iii. Ch. i. § 14.

* On the part of the thing, or from the nature of the thing.

hinder its existence, and therefore we must conclude that necessity of existence doth belong to the nature and notion of God, and is not any mode only of our conception; because, if we take away necessity of existence from God, we lose the notion of a Being absolutely perfect. It not only follows as a necessary conclusion from these preliminaries, but is in itself evident to the reason of any person, that if necessary existence belongs to the nature of God, he exists; for it implies no less than a contradiction, for a being to exist necessarily, and yet that it should be questionable whether he doth exist or not.

Such is the celebrated argument for the existence of God, which was brought forward by Des Cartes, and had been hinted at by some of the Schoolmen. I know not whether you have been able to follow the reasoning, and what impression it has made upon your minds. By some it has been considered as a complete demonstration, which supersedes all other arguments; but others have viewed it in a different light. It is one objection to it, that it is not easily apprehended, and almost eludes the grasp of the understanding: and it is of too shadowy a nature to produce a strong and vivid effect. By many distinguished metaphysicians and divines, it has been pronounced to be a sophism. It is acknowledged that whatever properties are included in the clear idea or notion of a subject, do certainly belong to it; and indeed, it is a selfevident and tautological proposition, that all things comprehended in any conception of the mind, may be predicated of it. But here the reasoning fails, in that it infers the actual existence of an object *in rerum natura*,* from the existence of the idea of it in the mind. "It seems to extend only," as Dr. Clarke observes, "to the nominal idea or mere definition of a self-existent Being, and does not, with a sufficiently evident connection, refer and apply that general nominal idea, definition, or notion, which we frame in our own mind, to any real particular being actually existing without us."† All that can be legitimately inferred is this, that if there exists any Being, in the clear idea of whom necessary existence is involved, that Being exists by a necessity of nature. If you say, but necessary existence is involved in the idea of God, it is manifest that the only just inference is, if God exists, necessary existence ought to be affirmed of him. You do not demonstratively prove that God exists in opposition to the atheist; you merely conclude hypothetically, that if there is a God, his existence is necessary. This the atheist will readily grant, and at the same time retain his opinion; because all that you have done is to settle the true idea of a God, while it still remains a subject of dispute, whether such a Being exists. I conclude with the words of Mr. Locke, who, declining to enter upon this argument, contents himself with the following general remark, "that it is an ill way of establishing the existence of God, to lay the whole stress of so important a point upon that sole foundation, and take some men's having that idea of God in their minds, (for it is evident some men have none, and some worse than none, and the most very different,) for the only proof of a Deity, and out of an over-fondness of that darling invention, cashier, or at least endeavour to invalidate, all other arguments, and forbid us to hearken to those proofs as being weak or fallacious, which our own existence, and the sensible parts of the universe, offer so clearly and cogently to our thoughts, that I deem it impossible for a considering man to withstand them."‡

II. Our second argument is, that since something exists now, something must have existed from eternity. The foundation of this argument is, the present existence of ourselves, and of the other parts of the universe. We are assured of our own existence by consciousness, and of the existence of other beings by the evidence of our senses, to which we give implicit credit by the law of our nature, without paying the least regard to the attempts of sceptical philosophers to invalidate their testimony. Hence we infer that something has existed from eternity, for nothing is more evident than that if there ever had been a time when no being existed, it was impossible that any being should have ever come into existence. Every being has a reason or ground of its existence, either in itself, and then it is self-existent, or in the will and power of some other being. But according to the supposition, no being necessarily exists, for there was a time when no being was; and consequently there was no reason or cause why any being should ever exist. There was a time when there was nothing, and how could something have been produced? Beings could not make themselves; for this would suppose them to have existed before they existed; and they could not have sprung up by chance, for chance signifies no cause of any kind, and is merely a word expressing our ignorance of the cause.

It is then certain, that since something now exists, something must have existed from eternity. About the truth of this proposition, there is in fact no dispute. It is admitted by atheists themselves; and, accordingly, the most celebrated of them in ancient times, Epicurus and his followers, while they maintained that the world, or the present system of the universe, was formed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, felt the necessity of acknowledging that atoms had moved in infinite space from eternity.

The atheist, being compelled to concede that something has existed from eternity, will tell us that it is the universe itself. Nature is underived and self-existent; we can trace no vestige of a beginning, and we see no prospect of an end. He has no objection to the idea of an eternal Being, if that being is not understood to be endowed with intelligence and power, and above all, to be possessed of such moral perfections as justice and purity, the thought of which would lay a restraint upon his conduct, and create the disquieting apprehension of a future reckoning.

Let us examine his position, and see whether it is consonant to reason. The human race is an important part of the universe, which, according to this hypothesis, has always existed by an eternal succession. Of the individuals who compose this succession, not one is self-existent, but each is derived from his immediate predecessors. The present generation has sprung from that which preceded it, and that generation from another, and so on as far as the series can be traced. Here then is a succession, every part of which had a beginning. To tell us that it is eternal, is to substitute a mere assertion for proof, and to hurry us on to the conclusion, without giving us time to inquire whether it is possible that such a succession could be eternal. We ask, how could a succession be eternal, although all its parts had a beginning? How could all the parts have a beginning, and yet the whole be without beginning? How could the individuals be dependent in respect of their being, having each derived it from his parents, and yet the race be self-existent? I am unable to conceive a more express contradiction, than to assert that all the parts had a beginning, but that the whole had no beginning; that the parts are finite, but that the whole is infinite. When we see a chain extended, we perceive the limits of each link, and conclude that, if we had time and opportunity, we could trace it to the first link. It would never enter into our minds that the chain was stretched out *in infinitum*.* The human race is a chain; individual men are the links; and we conclude as naturally and rationally in this as in the

* In the world, or universe. † Clarke's Discourse, p. 20.
‡ Essay on the Human Understanding, B. iv. c. 10

* Infinitely.

former case, that there is a first link on which the rest are dependent. No, says the atheist, the chain has no beginning; there never was a first man, the human race is eternal. In other words, he tells us that there is a chain which has only one end. Were any person to say so of a real chain, he would be supposed to have lost his senses; but when some men affirm that the human race had no beginning, they would have us believe that they are wiser than all the world besides, and assume the name of philosophers. Common sense revolts at this assertion, and every good man will rejoice to find that impiety is compelled to take refuge in palpable absurdity. We may apply this reasoning to the other parts of the universe. The various races of animals and vegetables; the diurnal motion of the earth; the revolutions of the heavenly bodies; and in a word all things, the duration of which is measured by hours, and days, and years, must have had a beginning.

Some disprove the eternity of the universe in the following manner:—If it has subsisted from eternity, it must have subsisted as it is; there being, on the hypothesis of atheists, no cause to produce a change, and a change being inconsistent with the idea of necessary existence. Hence we see, by the way, that matter cannot be that being which has existed from eternity. If it existed from eternity, it exists by necessity of nature. But it is an express contradiction to suppose that which exists necessarily, not to exist; and yet we are all sensible that there is no contradiction in supposing the non-existence of matter, for we can all conceive it to be annihilated. It is a contradiction to suppose that which exists necessarily, to exist in any other state or form. But we can conceive matter to be in motion or at rest; and finding some parts of it in the one state, and some in the other, we conclude that its existence is not necessary, but contingent. We can conceive it to be differently modified; that it might have wanted some of its properties, and possessed others which do not belong to it; that the frame of the universe might have been different; and that in our system there might have been more or fewer planets, and these might have been attended with more or fewer satellites. But if the universe is self-existent, it must have always been as it now is. The sun must always have been the centre of this system, and the planets must have always described their orbits around him. There must have been eternal revolutions of Saturn and the Georgium Sidus, and eternal revolutions of the Earth and Mercury. Now, as these revolutions are performed in different times, and, on the supposition of their eternity, are all infinite in number, it follows that we have infinites which as infinites must be equal, but being made up of revolutions performed in unequal times, are unequal. But this is impossible, and the hypothesis from which it is deduced is absurd. It has been objected, that according to the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of matter, there may be one infinite greater than another, as the parts of matter differ in size. But the infinite divisibility of matter is a mere figment of the imagination; and, besides, only implies that our minds can affix no limit to the division, while here the division is actually made; revolutions have been described in periods longer and shorter, and yet they are equal in number, for they are all infinite.

From the whole of the preceding reasoning, we are authorized to draw these conclusions; that something has existed from eternity; that that eternal Being is not matter or the universe; and, therefore, that there is a God, underived and independent, the Author of every thing which exists.

III. The next argument is founded on the proofs of design in the universe, according to the obvious dictate of reason, that where design appears, there must be a designer. An argument is frequently drawn from the creation of the universe; and certainly if it can be shewn that the heavens and the earth had a beginning, it follows that there is a Being of almighty power who called them out of nothing, because it is manifest that they could not give existence to themselves. Some remarks have been already made, in order to shew that matter could not be eternal; and we have thus anticipated a part of what might be said upon this head. Few, or perhaps none, of the heathen philosophers believed the creation of matter; but, in general, they admitted that it was arranged by divine agency, and consequently, that the present system had a beginning. A traditionary account of its origin seems to have prevailed among all nations; and the antiquity of the account is manifest from the writings of Moses, which, without assuming their inspiration, ought to be considered as a record of the opinion entertained upon this subject in his age, which preceded that of authentic profane history by a thousand years. The recent introduction of arts, which in many instances can be traced to their inventors; the late origin of nations; the total want of any credible accounts reaching farther back than about six thousand years; the imperfect occupation of the earth, which must long since have been fully peopled if it had existed from eternity; all these undeniable facts concur to prove, that it is not long since our globe and its inhabitants were brought into being, and consequently, that there is a great First Cause, by whose will and power they were produced.

Not to dwell upon this argument, I would call your attention to the evidences of intelligence in the works of nature, from which we are authorized to infer the existence of an intelligent cause. If any man should deny that there are marks of design, I could not answer him better than in the words of Cicero: "If those things which are formed by nature are better than those which are executed by art, and art effects nothing without reason, certainly nature is not to be accounted destitute of reason. How is it consistent, when you have looked at a statue or a painting, to acknowledge that art has been employed; when you have seen the course of a ship, not to doubt that it is guided by reason; when you contemplate a sun-dial, to be convinced that the hours are pointed out, not by chance, but by skill; and at the same time to be of opinion that the world, which comprehends those arts, and the artists, and all things, is without reason and counsel? If any person should carry into Scythia or Britain the sphere lately constructed by our friend Posidonius, the movements of which produce the same changes with respect to the sun, and the moon, and the five planets, which take place every day and night in the heavens, who in these barbarous countries could doubt that that sphere was constructed by reason? But these," namely, certain philosophers to whom he refers, "doubt concerning the world, whether it was made by chance, or by necessity, or by the divine reason and mind; and think that Archimedes had more concern in imitating the motions of the sphere than nature in effecting them."* Such are the reflections of that eloquent orator, and they command the approbation of every reflecting mind. If we lighted upon a book containing a well-digested narrative of facts, or a train of accurate reasoning, we should never think of calling it a work of chance, but would immediately pronounce it to be the production of a cultivated mind. If we saw in a wilderness a building well proportioned, commodiously arranged, and furnished with taste, we should conclude without hesitation, and without the slightest suspicion of mistake, that human intellect and human labour had been employed in planning and erecting it. In cases of this kind, an atheist would reason precisely as other men do. Why then does he not draw the same inference from the proofs of design which are discovered in the works of creation? While the premises are the

* De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. § 34.

same, why is the conclusion different? Upon what pretext of reason does he deny that a work, in all the parts of which wisdom appears, is the production of an intelligent author? and attribute the universe to chance, to nature, to necessity, to any thing, although it should be a word without meaning, rather than to God?

It is impossible to survey the objects around us with any degree of attention, and not perceive marks of design, ends aimed at, and means employed to accomplish those ends. We need to go no farther in quest of evidence than our own frame, which appears the more admirable the more carefully it is examined, and the more intimately it is known. No person who considers the use of the eye, and is acquainted with its internal structure, so skilfully adapted to the transmission and refraction of the rays of light, can any more doubt that it was intended for the purpose of vision, than he can doubt, when he understands the construction of a telescope, that it is intended to enable us to see objects at a distance. No man can doubt, when he examines the external form and internal configuration of the ear, that it is an instrument expressly provided for the conveyance of sound; or that the lungs were made for respiration; the stomach for the reception and concoction of our food; and the wonderful system of vessels known by the names of arteries and veins, for carrying the blood from the heart to every part of the body, and then returning it to its source; in one respect resembling the pipes by which water in the fountain or reservoir, is distributed through all the streets and lanes of a city. No man can doubt that the design of glands is to secrete; of nerves, to propagate feeling and motion; of the teeth, so differently formed, to cut and masticate; of legs, to support the body, and move it from place to place; of arms and hands divided into fingers, to perform the various operations which are necessary to our subsistence and comfort. These instances are quite sufficient to satisfy any reasonable inquirer.

Marks of design are equally apparent in the bodies of the inferior animals, which in their general structure bear a striking analogy to our own. When a difference is found, the proofs of wisdom multiply upon us, for it manifestly proceeds from an intention to accommodate the animal, or to adapt it to its peculiar circumstances. It is comprehensive wisdom; wisdom which can command not only one system of means, but a variety of expedients, to meet the diversity of cases which were necessary to the replenishing of the different parts of nature with inhabitants. For example, if one animal lives upon herbs, another upon seeds, and a third upon the flesh of other animals, we find that while they are in common furnished with a stomach, this member is differently constructed in each, so as to receive and digest its peculiar food. We observe again, that whether animals move upon the surface of the earth, or fly in the air, or swim in the waters, their external form and internal organization are admirably accommodated to their mode of life, and to the place of their habitation. This variety amidst uniformity is an evidence upon which we may confidently depend, that what appears to be design is not the effect of chance, or of a blind necessity which would always produce the same results, but of an intelligent mind, wonderful in counsel and excellent in working; of a Being fertile in contrivances, and in every instance choosing the best.

The doctrine of final causes cannot be admitted, without at the same time acknowledging a First Cause, possessed of knowledge and wisdom. Atheists have therefore exerted themselves to obscure its evidence, and to bring it into disrepute; but their attempts in this way have reflected no honour upon their understandings and their hearts. "Our bodily organs," says Lucretius, "were not formed that we might use them, but their prior formation suggested the use. Sight was not before the eyes were made, nor hearing before the ears; but the ears existed long before any sound was heard, and all our members before their office was discovered."* In short, according to this philosopher, for such he is called, eyes were not intended to see, nor tongues to speak, nor legs to move; but somehow they belonged to the body, and men ingeniously contrived to turn them to good account. There was no prospective contrivance in any of our organs and members; they were formed by chance; but luckily, it happened that they might be made to serve the various purposes of our being, and as luckily, men made the discovery, and wisely resolved to take the advantage of them. How long it was before this discovery was made, and if some time elapsed, how men contrived in the meantime to live without speech, and hearing, and sight, and motion, this hierophant of atheism has not condescended to inform us. It would be a waste of time to refute downright nonsense. You would laugh at a man who should tell you, that a telescope was not constructed with a design to view distant objects, but that after it was made, it was discovered that it would serve this purpose, and was therefore applied to it; and you may laugh at Lucretius, or any other fool, who affirms that sight is not the original design, but an accidental use of the eye.

The theories of modern atheists are not more wise, or more worthy of attention. Thus, some account for the production of living creatures, by what they call the principle of generation, that is, by a word; others, by the supposition, which you will observe is only a supposition, that nature is full of living particles, which have a tendency to arrange themselves in organized forms: and others, by what they call appetencies, "or propensities in parts of matter to particular actions, which by continual endeavours, carried on through a long series of generations, work themselves gradually into suitable forms, and at length acquire an organization fitted to the action which their respective propensities led them to exert."

"We know a cause," says Dr. Paley, "adequate to the appearances which we wish to account for; we have this cause continually producing similar appearances; yet, rejecting this cause, the sufficiency of which we know, and the action of which is constantly before our eyes, we are invited to resort to suppositions, destitute of a single fact for their support, and confirmed by no analogy with which we are acquainted. The 'suppositions' here alluded to, all agree in one character. They all endeavour to dispense with the necessity in nature, of a particular, personal intelligence; that is to say, with the exertion of an intending, contriving mind, in the structure and formation of the organized constitutions which the world contains. They would resolve all productions into *unconscious* energies, of a like kind, in that respect, with attraction, magnetism, electricity, &c. without any thing farther."†

I shall resume this argument in the next lecture.

LECTURE XVII.

ON GOD.

Argument for his Being from the marks of Design in the Universe, continued—Argument from general consent; its just force—Argument from Historical Evidences of a Superintending Providence—Reflections drawn from the Existence of God—Eternity of God; proof of it—Different from the perpetual duration of creatures—Speculations respecting his Eternal Existence—Spirituality of God—Doctrine of Materiality; contrary to Scripture and Reason.

In the last lecture, I entered upon the argument for the existence of God, from the proofs of design which

* Luc. de Rer. Nat. l. iv. 832. † Pal. Theol. c. 23.

are discovered in the works of nature, and illustrated it at considerable length. I directed your attention to the evidence presented by our own bodily constitution, and by the organization of other animated beings.

Proofs multiply upon us when we extend our observation to the various parts of the universe, and are not less striking and convincing in inanimate objects. To begin with those which, although organized, cannot be considered as endowed with consciousness and a principle of activity, there is not a tree, or a plant, or an herb, however insignificant it may seem, in which the signatures of divine wisdom may not be perceived. In the structure of vegetables, there is an arrangement, different indeed from what is observable in animals, but affording proofs not less satisfactory, of wise intention directed to the same general end, the subsistence, health and growth of the individual, and the continuation of the species. There are vessels for drawing nourishment from the soil to which they are attached; vessels for conveying the juices to every part; vessels for admitting and expiring the air; vessels for the production of flowers and fruits. Between a vegetable and a stone or a clod, the difference is great, and can be accounted for only by the agency of an intelligent Being. In the latter we see simple existence; but in the former we perceive design.

When we survey the surface of the earth, and observe the disposition of its parts, it is impossible for any person in his senses to suppose that they were huddled together by chance. There are clear indications of a wise and benevolent plan. We see the earth in one place, stretching out into plains, and in another, rising into hills and mountains; and the reason of this diversity is apparent. The plains would be arid wastes, furnishing no sustenance for man and beast, without the higher parts, which attract the clouds, and imbibing their watery treasures, distribute them to the lower regions in springs and streams which fructify the vallies, and give drink to their inhabitants. The surface of the globe is divided into the sea and the dry land. The dry land affords firm footing to man, and all terrestrial animals, as well as produces the vegetable substances which serve them for food. The sea is an inexhaustible source of vapours, which rising in the atmosphere, are there condensed, and descend in mists and rains; and at the same time, it facilitates the intercourse of nations, and the transportation of the productions of one region to another. Had there been no sea, the earth would have been a desert, the silent abode of desolation and death.

Once more, proofs of design present themselves to us when we look beyond this earth, and contemplate the system to which it belongs. In the centre is placed the sun, and around him the planets, retained in their orbits by an invisible power, perform their unceasing revolutions, while light and heat flow from this inexhaustible fountain to cheer their inhabitants. In particular, with respect to our earth, no rational man can doubt that its double motion is the effect of design, who considers that, by turning round its own axis once in twenty-four hours, the succession of day and night is produced; and that its annual motion round the sun gives rise to the changes of the seasons.

But of examples of contrivance there is no end. A few are sufficient to satisfy a candid inquirer; but in proportion as they are multiplied the argument becomes stronger; because, while it is possible that chance might produce the appearance of design in a solitary instance, although it has never yet formed a watch, a house, or the simplest instrument of labour, it is contrary to the idea of chance, that such appearances should be uniform or frequent. Our argument then is, that where there is design, there must be a designer; where there is a plan there must be a mind in which it was conceived. The adaptation of means to an end presupposes a being who had the end in view, and perceived the fitness of the means. The universe is full of designs. They are visible in its general frame and in its particular parts. The refuge of the atheist is to say, that the wisdom is in nature; but he speaks unintelligibly, and we are sure does not understand himself. Wisdom is an attribute of mind, and must reside in a being distinct from the universe, as the maker of a machine is distinct from the machine itself. That Being is God, "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

IV. An argument for the existence of God is founded on the general consent of mankind. It has been believed in all ages and nations, and is therefore consonant to the natural unbiassed dictates of the mind.

The fact of a general consent is, in the first place, to be proved; and for this purpose, we appeal to the history of the human race, of which religion makes a prominent part. It is objected, that some nations have been found without religion, or any idea of a God; but we have two answers to return. In the first place, the allegation has been made upon insufficient grounds in some cases at least, upon a superficial acquaintance with certain tribes, by persons ignorant of their language, and who had no proper opportunity to investigate their customs and opinions; and a more intimate knowledge of them has demonstrated that the account was a hasty and unjust assumption. But suppose that there were some tribes who had no notion of religion, the strength of the argument would be little impaired; because we do not affirm that men have an innate idea of God, but that the idea presents itself, with the evidence of truth, to those who are capable of thinking as rational beings; and if in the persons supposed, reason has not been exercised, if it is almost in a dormant state, and they in fact differ little from brutes, it is no more wonderful that they have not discovered this truth than it is that a blind man does not see. But it may be said, that the existence of God has been denied by men, who had cultivated reason, and were dignified with the name of philosophers. It is not certain, however, that they really disbelieved it, although the love of singularity might lead them to say so; but if they really did disbelieve, we know that prejudice and sophistry sometimes pervert minds, which deem themselves completely free from their influence, and that there is no truth, not even the evidence of the senses, which some person or other, calling himself a philosopher, has not controverted. At any rate, they are but a few against many, a minority not to be considered, when opposed to the innumerable millions who have maintained the contrary doctrine. "Let it be supposed," says Bishop Wilkins, "that some men have declared a disbelief of the divine nature in general; yet as there have always been some monsters among men, in respect of their bodies, so may there be likewise in respect of their minds; and this is no prejudice to the standing laws of nature."*

It may be objected farther, that mankind have not agreed in the belief of one God, but of a multiplicity of Gods, and that, with the exception of the Jews, polytheism was the system of all nations in ancient times, as it still is, where neither Christianity nor Mahometanism has been introduced. But even among such nations, the general principle was admitted, that there is a nature superior to man, by which the universe was arranged in its present form, and its affairs are still administered: besides, it should be remarked, that although the doctrine of the unity was much obscured, yet it was not altogether obliterated; for even the grossest idolaters retained the notion of a supreme deity, called Ζευς and Jupiter, by the Greeks and Romans, and

* Principles and Duties of Natural Religion, Book i. chap. 4.

described by the latter, as *hominum Sator atque Deorum.** Some of their philosophers approached still nearer to the truth, and conceived him to be exalted far above the gods of vulgar adoration, and as requiring to be worshipped, not by images and sacrifices, but by devout meditation and virtuous conduct.

The atheists of the school of Epicurus, accounted for this general belief by the principle of fear. *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor.*† But this seems to be reasoning quite worthy of the system which it is brought to support. It puts the effect before the cause. Other men would have supposed that fear proceeded from the previous belief of a power or powers superior to mortals, which were able to injure them. Every other affection is excited by a suitable object; but in the present case, men by some inexplicable impression began to be afraid of something, they knew not what; and thinking this very unreasonable, as it undoubtedly was, set about finding out an adequate cause of their fear, and luckily lighted upon the idea of Gods, terrible beings whom it was hazardous to offend. We need say nothing more about this theory, however ingenious it might appear to its inventors.

Another attempt was made to account for this general belief, by ascribing it to the artifice of statesmen, who contrived in this manner to give greater authority to their laws, and to retain men in subjection by the sanctions of religion. But an assertion without proof, we are at liberty to deny. By what historical facts is it supported? Who was the first legislator, who propagated the story of the existence of the Gods? And how did he succeed in persuading a whole people to give credit to a dogma, of which they had no evidence but his affirmation, and had never heard a whisper before? If one legislator was the inventor of it, how did it come to spread rapidly over the whole earth? Or did all the princes and statesmen of the world assemble in congress, and having agreed upon this expedient for maintaining their authority, return to their respective countries to put it in practice? Was there in ancient times a holy alliance? And how did it happen that they became the dupes of their own stratagem, and believed in the Gods as firmly as their subjects?

With a few exceptions, the belief of a superior Being, obscured indeed by polytheistic notions, has prevailed among mankind. We do not appeal to this fact, as if the existence of God were to be decided by the number of suffrages, or rested upon the feeble basis of opinion. We would not represent it as conclusive in itself, independently of other proofs; nor is it the strongest argument in favour of the doctrine, but can be viewed only in the light of a subsidiary one. The amount of it is this, that there is something in the constitution of the human mind, which leads to this belief; or that it is the result of the due exercise of the rational powers, with which man is endowed. When we find men in distant countries, who had no intercourse with one another, born in distant ages, and differing widely in language, and manners, and modes of thinking, united in believing that there exists a great Being, who is the Maker or the Ruler of the world, what can we infer, but that the proofs of his existence are exhibited throughout all nature, and are so conspicuous as to be seen by every eye? The consent of nations corroborates the argument, which we have drawn from the marks of design in the works of creation; as it shews that the inference deduced from them is not a local prejudice, but a legitimate conclusion from the premises. "What nation is there," says Cicero, "or race of men, which does not entertain some notion of the Gods prior to instruction? When, therefore, this opinion is not established by instruction, or custom, or law, and all without exception firmly assent to it; it is necessary to understand that there are Gods, since we have implanted or rather innate knowledge of them. It is necessary that that, in which all naturally agree, should be true."*

V. The existence of God may be inferred from a variety of facts in the history of human affairs. Every argument which proves a superintending Providence, proves that there is an intelligent and active Being by whom the universe is governed. When we appeal to the order and regularity which prevail, and to the beneficial results of the operations which are incessantly going on around us, the atheist tells us that these are the laws of nature. But what is nature? is it something, or nothing; a being distinct from the universe, or the universe itself? If nature means the universe, he has given us no information. We inquired how there is such order in the universe, and how such beneficial effects are produced; and he deems it sufficient to say, that such is the constitution of things. Such an answer we might receive from an ignorant man, whom we had interrogated respecting something which he did not understand. He would say, I do not know, but so it is. But surely we should never think of calling this man a philosopher. With the exception of professed atheists, all men have acknowledged a Providence; and events occur of such a character, as to lead the mind away from the mere succession of natural causes and effects, to the interposition of an almighty and intelligent Agent. When we see an undoubted instance of retributive justice—and such instances are not rare even under this mixed dispensation—we unavoidably think of an invisible Judge; and when we observe tokens of wisdom more than human, directing and controlling, and over-ruling events to its own ends, we have recourse to Him who works all things according to the counsel of his will. The atheist may talk of such events in the jargon of his system, but he cannot fully satisfy his own mind, and still less the minds of others. Hence it sometimes happens that, bold when there is no danger, but a coward when calamity and death seem to be near, he is dismayed at the tokens of a present Deity, and with a voice of terror, implores the mercy of the Being whom he lately scorned as a phantom.

Under this argument supernatural facts have been adduced as proofs of the existence of God. By these, we mean facts which cannot be accounted for by the known laws of nature. There may be facts of an extraordinary kind which cannot be called miraculous, because, although they show a deviation from the ordinary course, they do not imply a suspension of the laws, or the interposition of a power superior to them. They are the result of natural causes unusually combined; and in this way, we explain the production of monsters, and strange phenomena, which excite wonder. But if it can be proved, that on any occasion, a law of nature has been suspended or reversed, it is a legitimate inference that there exists somewhere a power by which nature is controlled. I allude to two kinds of facts as indicating the agency of a Being greater than nature and its laws, namely, miracles and prophecy; and in appealing to these, I tread in the steps of the most illustrious philosophers of antiquity, who considered omens, prodigies, and oracles, as proofs of the existence and providence of the gods. It would be preposterous at present to quote Scripture as authoritative, because we must first be assured that there is a God, before we can know that any book contains a revelation of his will. I refer to the sacred writings only as records, the genuineness of which has been fully established, and from which we learn that works, which may be strictly called miraculous, have been performed; and that predictions were delivered many ages ago,

* Father of men and gods.

† Fear first made gods in the world.

* Cic. de Nat. Deorum, Lib. i. § 17.

which have been subsequently fulfilled with the utmost exactness. If a miracle is an event which could not be brought to pass by any law of nature, it cannot be denied, that to give sight to a man born blind, to restore an arm or a leg which was wanting, and to still a storm by a simple command, were miracles: and what conclusion could those who witnessed them draw, or what conclusion can be drawn by those who are assured of them by competent testimony, but that there is a Being who sways the sceptre over the universe, and is possessed of power sufficient to the production of any effect? The same conclusion follows from prophecy, which, supposing knowledge in the prophet that does not belong to man, must have proceeded from an intelligent Being, to whom the future is as manifest as the present, and who possesses such dominion over physical and moral causes, over the material system, and the thoughts and volitions of men, as to accomplish with unerring certainty whatever he had foretold. That Being is God.

Such are the arguments by which we demonstrate this fundamental doctrine of religion. Some of them are conclusive by themselves; and when taken together, they compose a mass of evidence which must give complete satisfaction to every person who fairly considers them, and which nothing can resist but prejudice and obstinate incredulity.

Before I proceed further, I shall lay before you two or three reflections upon the truth which we have established.

First the doctrine of the existence of God diffuses light and order over the whole system of creation. The atheist can account for nothing; his creed is embarrassed with inextricable difficulties. He ascribes eternity to beings who must have had a beginning: he speaks of contrivances which had no contriver; he sees many bodies in motion which observe a constant and regular course, but denies that there is a first mover. To him the universe is a riddle, and a mystery. A Deity explains the phenomena of nature. As soon as he is recognized, we have power which could call the things which are out of nothing; wisdom capable of arranging and governing them; and goodness, the source of the beauty which charms our eyes, and of the happiness which is felt through all the ranks of animated beings. I cannot conceive an atheist to experience any pleasure from the contemplation of objects in which he perceives no marks of intelligence and benevolence, nothing on which an enlightened and feeling mind would delight to dwell. But, to the religious man, nature is a mirror which reflects the glory of its Maker. It is animated by his presence; it brightens under his smile; it speaks of him to all nations, and proclaims him to be wise and good.

Secondly, the doctrine which we have established by so many arguments shews us at the head of nature, a Being, the contemplation of whom is calculated to rouse the noblest energies of our souls, the best affections of the heart. The atheist sees no being in the universe better than himself, and hence selfishness becomes the distinguishing feature in his character. He lives to himself, and regards his own interests as of paramount importance; and nothing but the dread of reaction and retribution, restrains him from making inroads upon the happiness of others. To the moral discipline of the mind; to acts of self-denial and disinterested beneficence; to the abhorrence of crime for its own sake; to the maintenance of purity and innocence, even when there is no danger of detection, and no fear of any painful result; there is no motive in the system of the atheist. But the idea of a God holds out to view an assemblage of perfections which command our reverence and our love, and create the desire of approximating, in some faint degree, to the standard of excellence. From this idea flow all the sentiments and emotions of piety, and the various exercises of virtue in the mortification of unhallowed appetite, the patient endurance of evil, and the practice of justice and charity. Religion is the parent of every good quality in man; the glory of his nature consists in the impress which it bears of the image of his Maker.

Lastly this doctrine is replete with consolation amidst the vicissitudes and troubles of life. In the hour of extremity, the atheist has no resource but reluctant and sullen submission to necessity. He has nothing to reconcile him to the evils of life, which come, he knows not how, and rob him of a portion of his happiness without any compensation. His ultimate prospect is annihilation or unconsciousness, when the bubble of existence shall burst, and mingle with the elements. He lives like a beast, and like a beast he shall die. Amidst the distresses of the present scene, religion points to God, the Father of our spirits, the friend and guardian of the righteous, from whose omnipotent love there is every thing to hope. It teaches us to resign ourselves to his merciful disposal; to be thankful even for afflictions, because they are instruments of good; and to trust, in the most forlorn circumstances, amidst the decays and failure of our bodily constitution, that he will bestow upon us, in another state of being the happiness which it has seemed meet to his wisdom to deny us in this world.

This great and glorious Being, whose existence we have proved by a variety of arguments, is ETERNAL. According to our conceptions, eternity is distinguished into anterior and posterior; or, in the language of the schools, into eternity *a parte ante*, and eternity *a parte post*; that is, we conceive of it as a duration preceding the present moment, which had no beginning, and a duration following, which will have no end. We have already seen that since something exists now, something has existed from eternity; that that something is not matter, or the universe, but a living, intelligent Being, a designing Cause, the Author of the manifold contrivances which we observe in the creation. There was a time when he existed alone, and there never was a time when he did not exist. This existence is not contingent, but necessary. He exists in and of himself; and to suppose any anterior reason of his existence, would be to strip him at once of eternity and independence; and would prove that we had erred in conceiving him to be God, and that the name ought to be transferred to the prior cause. It is evident, that what exists by necessity of nature, must have always existed. The idea of the Epicureans, that the Gods were formed by the same chance, to which they attributed the formation of all other things, was absurd; and their sole design in allowing their existence, was to avoid the charge of atheism, by a seeming acknowledgment of the popular system. The ancients justly remarked that they granted it in name, but denied it in fact.

As God has existed from eternity, so he will exist to eternity; to use the language of inspiration, "his years shall not fail." No conceivable reason can be assigned, why he should cease to be. There is no superior Being upon whom he is dependent for existence, and who might revoke his gift; and in his nature there is no principle of decay. From the one or the other of these causes, every other being might be annihilated or reduced to a state of unconsciousness; but the Creator is manifestly not exposed to their influence. "A principle," says Plato, "has no origin, for all things arose from a principle, but the first principle arises from nothing, neither were it a first principle, if it were originated by some other. And if it has no beginning, it can have no end." The eternity of God has been proved from his immensity in the following manner. "The mode of existence," says Gale, "always follows the

mode of essence, because existence, according to the confession of the schools, adds nothing to essence but actuality; neither is it indeed really distinct from essence. Now duration is nothing else but continued existence; whence it necessarily follows, that if God's essence be infinite, his existence and duration must be also infinite."* But as we have not yet demonstrated the infinitude of the Divine Essence, we shall not deduce an argument from it in proof of its eternity. We think, that its eternity is manifest from its necessary existence; for hence, it is equally evident that it shall never cease to be, as it is that it never began to be. Necessity operates alike at all times. It is a permanent reason; it is the same now as it formerly was; and it will be the same hereafter as it is now. Contingent beings exist at one time, and may not exist at another, because there is nothing in their own nature which secures their continuance; but a necessary Being is immutable in duration. What he at present is, he always will be.

From what has been said, we perceive an important difference between the eternity of God and that which may be predicated of some of his creatures, as angels and human spirits. Both are destined to exist for ever, but they are not necessarily immortal, and there is no contradiction in supposing them to be annihilated; nor is their existence without beginning, as it will be without end. There was a time when they were not; and all that can be said of them is, that having begun, they shall never cease, to exist. Their life is an interminable series; it will flow on without intermission, and never approach nearer to a close. It is an infinite duration, not absolutely, but as it is incommensurate, admits of no limits, and will be perpetually progressive. The eternity of God comprehends the past as well as the future, and is thus expressed by an inspired writer: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God."† And hence we may see why, although angels and the souls of men shall subsist for ever, it is said of God, that "he only hath immortality."‡ To him exclusively belongs the attribute of absolute, underived, independent, and necessary eternity. The creatures to whom we have referred, shall never die, but their continuance in life is the result of the will of their Creator; and besides, to speak in our imperfect manner of so mysterious a subject, it is only half an eternity which is allotted to them as their portion, the half which is to come, while eternal ages had revolved before they were called out of nothing. But there is still a more important difference between the eternity of God, and that of creatures. Theirs is not wholly possessed at once; it is enjoyed in detail, and consists in a perpetual succession of moments. It unites stability and change; stability, as their existence is infallibly secured, and change, as it is a constant transition from one part of duration to another. But the eternity of God has been defined to be the interminable possession of life, complete, perfect, and at once. *Æternitas est interminabilis vitæ tota simul et perfecta possessio.*‖ The import of this definition is, that the divine existence is not like that of creatures, successive; but comprehends what we call the past, the present and the future. These are divisions of time; but the first and the last have no place in the duration of the Supreme Being, to whom nothing is past, and nothing is future. The Schoolmen call it *punctum stans*, or *nunc semper stans*,§ and a celebrated poet has thus expressed it:

Nothing there is to come, and nothing past,
But an eternal NOW does always last.*

These have been pronounced to be words which have no meaning; but with the same critic we must acknowledge, "that as some being must necessarily have existed from eternity, so this being does exist after an incomprehensible manner, since it is impossible for a being to have existed from eternity after our manner or notions of existence. Revelation confirms these natural dictates of reason in the accounts which it gives us of the divine existence, where it tells us, that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; that he is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending; that a thousand years are with him as one day, and one day as a thousand years; by which and the like expressions, we are taught, that his existence with relation to time or duration, is infinitely different from the existence of any of his creatures, and consequently that it is impossible for us to frame any adequate conceptions of it."†

Whatever objections may be made to an eternal NOW, and a *punctum stans*, as abortive attempts to express the mode of the divine existence, the truth which they are intended to signify, however confounding to our apprehensions, namely, an eternal existence without succession, may be established by this argument; that a past infinite succession is impossible, as we showed in the preceding lecture, when proving that creatures could not have existed from eternity. We can conceive a future infinite succession, or a line continually extending; but we cannot conceive a past infinite succession, or a line which had not a beginning. Hence, whatever difficulty we may experience in annexing an idea to our words, we must pronounce the eternity of God to be stationary, and not like ours, in motion. It may be objected, that in Scripture, his eternity is described by differences of time, and in particular that he is represented as one, "who was, and is, and is to come."‡ But it may be answered, that these are only adaptations of the subject to our modes of thinking, of which we have other examples in the attribution of corporeal members and human affections to the Deity. We have no word which properly expresses the stable nature of his eternity, and are under the necessity of applying to it words in common use, founded on the divisions of time. "In eternity," it has been said, "there is no divisibility, no majority or minority, no priority or posteriority, no accession, recession, or succession; no difference of time, but one indivisible, simple, and permanent instant." Passages have been quoted from Heathen Philosophers, which prove that this idea did not originate among Theologians, but was entertained long before the Christian era. I shall mention only the saying of Plato, "that the parts of time, *it was*, and *it is*, agree not to eternity, because these imply motion and succession; but eternity is always immutably the same."

A subject so far above our comprehension may be easily perplexed by objections. It has been said, that if there is no succession in the eternity of God, all succession among creatures is impossible; what is past must be present, as well as what is to come. It has been replied, "that in the co-existence of God with creatures, there is priority and posteriority, not in God, but in temporary beings. The co-existence of things with God is successive, according to the necessitude of the things, and so the co-existence of God with the creatures admits of some kind of succession as to external denomination; not as if there were any new existence of God with the creatures, but only by reason of the new existence of the creatures with God." I know not whether this answer is satisfactory; but we may be equally puzzled with respect to the immensity

* Court of the Gentiles, part iv. B. ii. c. 4. § 3.
† Ps. xc. 2. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 16.
‖ Eternity is the interminable, and at the same time, entire and perfect possession of life.
§ An immoveable PRESENT, or an everlasting NOW.

* Cowley. † Spectator, No. 590. ‡ Rev. iv. 8.

of God, and it may be asked, how can he be present in different places without being extended? as well as, how can he co-exist with creatures, without a successive duration? It is no reason for rejecting a doctrine established upon solid grounds, that there are objections to it, which we cannot answer. It is acknowledged on all hands, that the divine existence is mysterious; and I think, it has been proved from the nature of time, that this cannot be the measure of it. In a Being who had no beginning, succession is impossible.

Having found that there is a Being self-existent and eternal, we are naturally desirous to obtain some more intimate knowledge of him, and in the first place, to ascertain what is his nature. Of the essences of all beings, we are profoundly ignorant: we are acquainted only with their properties; but these we arrange in different classes, and call that to which the one class belongs, matter, and that to which the other belongs, spirit. Both *substrata*, or subjects, are equally concealed from us by an impenetrable veil. The objection against the existence of spirit, that we can form no conception of it, holds in full force against the existence of matter, for we have no idea of it distinct from its qualities.

As it has already appeared, that matter is not eternal and self-existent, it has been virtually proved, that God is not a material being. If he were material, he could not be immense, for it is not more absurd to speak of an infinite duration which is past, than of an infinite extension, that is, of an infinite whole made up of finite parts. It is certain that matter must have limits, however difficult it may be to imagination to fix them. Besides, according to the acknowledged doctrine of the impenetrability of matter, or that two bodies cannot occupy the same portion of space, were the Deity material, he would be necessarily excluded from every place which is filled up by the visible creation. Were God material, he would be divisible; for divisibility is an essential property of matter. His substance might be separated, and would be actually separated by other corporeal beings; who, occupying certain portions of space, would not only exclude him from them, but would interpose between one part of his essence and another, as the continuity of a stream is destroyed by the rocks which rise above its surface. He would also be subject to change from every interposition of this kind; would now be expelled from one place, and then fill up another, as different bodies advanced or retired; in short, as mutability is essential to matter, although there were no cause of mutation in himself, he would be continually exposed to impressions from external objects. I will not add, however, that if he were a material being, he would be visible; because this is not a necessary consequence; there being much matter which is not perceived by the eye, as the atmospheric gases, the magnetic fluid, and electric matter not in a state of ignition.

It will not be deemed superfluous to prove, that God is not a material being, if you reflect, that erroneous ideas upon this subject have been entertained, not only by heathens, but by professed Christians. Some of the Fathers appear to have thought, that God had a bodily shape. The same was the opinion of the Anthropomorphites, who believed, as their name imports, that when man is said to have been created in the image of God, there is a reference to his body as well as his soul. Among the older Socinians also, the same gross apprehension prevailed; and some of them maintained, that God was confined to heaven, and might be seen there with our bodily eyes.

The passages of Scripture, which are supposed to favour this impious opinion, have been misunderstood. The image of God in which man was created, is expressive of a moral resemblance to his Maker, and is elsewhere said to consist in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Appearances of the Deity, in ancient times, were intended solely to affect the mind through the medium of the senses, and not at all to suggest the idea, that he was in himself such a being as was perceived by the eye. We have no reason to suppose, that any of the persons who were favoured with such appearances, fell into this mistake. The ascription of bodily members to the Most High, can be easily accounted for. It is simply an accommodation to our modes of thinking; and is designed to teach us, that there exist in the divine nature, qualities corresponding to those in men; which are exerted by means of corporeal organs. Eyes and ears are expressive of his knowledge, and hands of the power by which he performs his mighty works. We may add to these considerations, that in other places of scripture, such descriptions are given of the transcendent greatness of Jehovah, as are utterly irreconcilable with the notion of corporeal and limited existence. He who measures the waters in the hollow of his hand, and metes out the heavens with a span, and comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure, may justly ask, "To whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?"

The conclusion to which we are led by the preceding reasoning, is, that God is a Spirit. We cannot tell what a spirit is, but we know, that it is not compounded, that it is not divisible, that it is not the object of sight or of touch. There are other properties of spirit, which strengthen our argument, because we have undoubted evidence, that they belong to the divine essence, but cannot be predicated of matter.

First, he is a living being, as we infer from the fact, that there is life in the universe, which is replenished with various orders of animated creatures; and it is a dictate of reason, that there cannot be more in the effect, than there is in the cause. Now, life is the peculiar attribute of spirit. Matter is dead. If our bodies are said to be alive, it is solely because they are connected with another substance by which they are actuated; and hence, as soon as the union is dissolved, they are reduced to the same state of insensibility with the earth in which they are deposited. God is called in Scripture "the living God," and "Jehovah," which is his incommunicable name, and imports that he possesses all life in himself, underived, independent, and immutable. He is the fountain of life; and all that feel and think, all that exert the various energies of body and mind, live, and move, and have their being in him.

Secondly, he is an intelligent being, as we collect from the appearances of design in his works. But knowledge is an attribute of spirit or mind. There is nothing in the properties of matter which is allied to thought and feeling. Divide or combine it as you will; take it in its state of greatest refinement, pure as a ray of light, and subtle as an impalpable and invisible gas; it makes no nearer approximation to thought than in its rudest and most unshapely form. Even when organized, it is still unconscious; and merely serves as the instrument of sensation to the principle with which it is united. It is not the eye which sees, or the ear which hears, but the soul. Matter being incapable of intelligence, all the proofs of wisdom in the universe, are at the same time proofs, that the divine essence is spiritual. God is a being possessed of understanding. He certainly knows every thing in the system which he made and governs; and we may presume, also knows every thing possible, every thing which his power could effect.

Thirdly, he is an active being. He is the first cause of all things which exist, the prime mover of this great machine. We are conscious of the activity of our own spirits, which are employed without interval when we are awake, and are often equally busy in sleep. Matter is essentially inactive. It moves only by impulse; and

as it cannot begin, so it is incapable of stopping or altering its motion. Power belongs to God, as we know from its effects; and it belongs to him, because he is a Spirit. As he is possessed of intelligence, so he is possessed of will; and its acts are omnipotent. He speaks, and it is done; that is, the effect follows the volition, without delay and without difficulty. His work is perfected in a moment, as it was in the beginning, when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

It follows from the spirituality of his essence, that he is the object of mental contemplation. We neither see his shape, nor hear his voice. Wrapt up in the mystery of his nature, he is concealed from the eyes of mortals. He addresses our senses in his works and his word; but in this case, the senses serve only to convey to the mind materials of reflection, from which we rise by a gradual ascent to a conception, imperfect indeed, but not altogether unworthy of the Being of beings; with whom none in heaven or earth can be compared, and whose glory the highest created understanding cannot fully comprehend. He is "the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see."

LECTURE XVIII.

ON GOD.

The Unity of God: inferred from the harmony of the Universe; just force of this Argument: Unity inferred from various other Properties in the Divine Nature—Unity opposed to Polytheism and Dualism—Account of Dualism—Unity consistent with a Trinity in the Godhead.

We have proved that there is a Being distinct from the universe, who has existed from eternity by necessity of nature, and upon whom all other things depend. We have neither seen his shape, nor heard his voice; he is concealed from all our senses; and it is solely by the deductions of reason from the objects around us, that we arrive at the knowledge of him. The arguments in support of this fundamental truth are conclusive, and produce, in every unprejudiced mind, a conviction not inferior in strength to that which we entertain of our own existence. But our inquiries will not stop here. We must feel a desire to be more fully acquainted with this mysterious Being; to make some partial discovery of his character; to ascertain what he is in himself, and in his relation to us; what are the distinguishing properties of his nature; what homage we owe to him, and what expectations we are authorized to entertain.

In our reasoning in proof of the existence of God, we have proceeded on the assumption that there is only one eternal and self-existent Being; nothing occurred in our progress which could lead us to suspect that there is a plurality. Those who argue from the idea of God, include in it every possible perfection, and consequently unity; for certainly a Being existing alone, without any equal, is more perfect and glorious than he would be if there were other beings independent and possessed of the same excellencies. The argument, that since something now exists something must have always existed, does not require that there should be more than one; for this is its amount, that since the universe could not have started into being by chance, nor have subsisted from eternity, because an infinite past succession is impossible, there must have been a self-existent First Cause, and more than one do not appear to be necessary. In like manner, when we reason from the proofs of design, that there is a designing Cause, we meet with nothing which suggests the idea of combined operation; but as we shall presently see, the uniformity which prevails, indicates a single agent throughout the whole system, as far as we are able to trace it. The consent of nations seems at first not to be favourable to the point which we purpose to establish, because polytheistic notions were generally adopted; but it will appear, that amidst the strange aberrations of the human mind, the idea of unity was more or less explicitly retained. Lastly, the extraordinary events which imply the existence of a Cause different from nature, and superior to it, may be accounted for without referring them to more than one Agent; or rather, as all such are properly connected with the same dispensation, and aim at the same end, they are all referrible only to one.

These are only introductory hints respecting the important truth which it is my present design to illustrate, namely, the unity of God. It will be necessary to enter into a full view of the arguments by which it is evinced, and at the same time to consider the opinions which are, or are understood to be, opposed to it. The proposition which it will be the business of this lecture to establish, is, that although there are many beings to whom the name of God has been given by idolaters, and some to whom it has been given by higher authority, in a metaphorical sense, yet there is only one Being who is God by nature, self-existent, independent, and infinitely perfect.

The unity of God may be proved, first, from the contemplation of nature, and secondly, by metaphysical arguments.

The first argument is founded on the uniformity of the works of nature, and is level to every capacity. The system of creation, as far as it comes under our observation, is regular and harmonious, and furnishes no ground to suspect that there was more than one agent concerned in it. In order to perceive the truth of this argument, it will be necessary to enter into a detail of particulars.

Let us begin with the human race, which is scattered over the surface of the earth, but in all its modifications is manifestly the production of the same almighty and beneficent Author. We observe some points of difference among the families and tribes into which it is divided, in the features of the face, the colour of the skin, and I believe too, in the configuration of some of the bones. These varieties, however, may be accounted for from the operation of local causes, upon the hypothesis that they are strictly one race, descended from common progenitors; but laying revelation at present out of the question, and admitting for a moment that they are distinct races, we shall find the argument rather strengthened than weakened; because the sameness amidst partial diversity, the sameness in every thing essential, while the diversity relates only to minute and trivial circumstances, irresistibly demonstrates that one Being made them all. They have all the same external form, the same instruments of motion and action, the same organs of sense. When we examine their internal structure, it appears that there is the same provision of means for the sustenance of life. Blood is circulated by the same apparatus of veins and arteries; food is digested by the same process; and the same secretions are going on in the system. When they are viewed as intellectual beings, they present a considerable diversity, but not such as to infer a different origin. All the differences arise, not as some dreaming speculatists have imagined, from a difference of minds, but from a difference of circumstances; and, accordingly, we find that every where men possess the powers of perception, observation, comparison, and reasoning, the power of volition, and the affections of love and hatred, fear and hope, joy and sorrow, to which we add, a sense of moral obligation.

When we turn our attention to the other inhabitants

of the globe, we observe that in some respects they differ widely from men, as they differ from one another, but still we perceive a general resemblance. Although in shape quadrupeds are unlike us, yet the same component parts are found in their bodies as in ours. They have the same organs of sense, organs of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling. In their internal organization, there is a surprising conformity. As they have teeth to seize, cut, and masticate their food, so they are furnished with a stomach in which it is lodged and digested, and with vessels for conveying the nutriment to the various parts of the body, by means of the blood with which it is incorporated, and which is circulated in the same manner as in the body of man. When the end is the same, and the contrivance for accomplishing it is the same, we cannot reasonably doubt that the Artificer is the same. Birds which fly in the air are very different from quadrupeds which walk upon the earth, and fishes which swim in water are different from both; but while their respective forms are adapted to the elements in which they are destined to move, they resemble each other in their internal organization, so far as their different kinds of life will permit, in so much that it may be confidently affirmed, that the same intelligence which contrived the quadruped, contrived also the fowl and the fish.

The analogy is not so striking in the case of vegetables; but still there are so many points of resemblance as to justify the introduction of them in the present argument. They do not possess life, as implying sensation and consciousness; but they are said to live, because they are nourished and grow like animals, and like them are subject to disease, the effects of old age, and dissolution. Fixed to the soil, they are provided with the means of drawing nutriment from it and from the surrounding atmosphere, by their roots and leaves. They are also furnished with vessels corresponding to those in animated beings, for conveying the nourishment received by the roots to the extremities. The juices flow in them as the blood flows in our bodies; and, according to the opinion of some naturalists, circulates like the blood. The leaves serve the same purpose which lungs serve to us, by taking in and giving out air, which is necessary to the health and life of the vegetable. Lastly, all vegetables are endowed as well as animals, with the power of propagating their kind.

Hitherto we have pursued the argument throughout all living nature. We see one Spirit working in all. When we pass to the consideration of the terraqueous globe, the proofs of God multiply upon us. Of animated beings, some are fitted to move on a solid surface, others are capable of pursuing their course in the air, while others can live only in water. To provide for this variety, the globe consists of dry land and of sea, and is surrounded by an atmosphere. Thus the habitation is accommodated to the inhabitants, and both have evidently been contrived by one Mind. The argument is precisely the same, if we suppose, as was actually the case, the globe to have been first formed, and then its inhabitants. The adaptation, in either case, suggests the same original, unless we give way to imagination, and absurdly fancy that the globe was created by one Being, and that another, finding it a useless solitude, produced a variety of creatures to fill up its vacant spaces; an idea not more probable, than it would be to say, that one generation of men built houses without any object in view, and another discovering that they would serve admirably for dwellings, took possession of them, and furnished them.

Throughout its whole extent, our globe exhibits proof of its having been formed by the same almighty hand. Every where the dry land is composed of the same materials, and the sea has the same properties. "New countries," says Dr. Paley, "are continually discovered, but the old laws of nature are always found in them; new plants perhaps, or animals, but always in company with plants or animals which we already know, and always possessing many of the same general properties. We never get amongst such original, or totally different modes of existence, as to indicate that we are come into the province of a different Creator, or under the direction of a different will. In truth, the same order of things attends us wherever we go. The elements act upon one another; electricity operates, the tides rise and fall, the magnetic needle elects its position in one region of the earth and sea, as well as in another. One atmosphere invests all parts of the globe, and connects all; one sun illuminates; one moon exerts its specific attraction upon all parts."*

But the argument is not confined to this globe, which constitutes a very minute part of the universe. The Being whose existence we have demonstrated, is the Author of nature in its wide extent, and proofs of his unity are furnished by the most distant regions to which our observation extends. We know but little of them; but we discover enough to convince us that they are sustained and governed by the same power which superintends the affairs of the earth. There can be no doubt, that there is one Author of the great system to which our globe belongs, since it is found to be a part of the system, a wheel in the mighty machine; for surely it will not be supposed that it was introduced by one Being among the works of another. While it performs its annual revolution around the sun, there are other bodies revolving at the same time in their orbits, and for the same purposes, at once to enjoy his light, and to experience a vicissitude of seasons. Now, the same law which retains our earth, retains them in their respective paths, namely, the law of gravitation; and to a reflecting mind, what is gravitation but the power of God? His power then, acts from Mercury to Uranus or the Georgium Sidus; it is one Being who exerts his energy throughout this mighty portion of space. It will strengthen this conclusion to reflect, that some at least of the planets are known to be surrounded with an atmosphere as our globe is; and that the same expedient has been adopted to relieve the tedium of the night, by the provision of satellites or moons which accompany them, and supply light in the absence of the sun. The eye extends beyond our system, immense as it seems, and perceives many brilliant points, which we know to be bodies of great magnitude, that resemble the sun in being sources of light, and probably also of heat. We can hardly do any thing more than form conjectures concerning them. One thing, however, we certainly know, that the light proceeding from them is subject to the same laws with the light flowing from the sun, or from any luminous body on the surface of the earth. It is perceived by our eyes in the same manner, moves with the same velocity, is reflected and refracted like any other rays. Farther our knowledge does not extend; but here we have a proof, that he who made the sun made the stars also. This induction of particulars, we have been told, serves only to establish a unity of design; and, notwithstanding the uniformity of nature, it is possible that it is the work of more agents than one, who perfectly concurred in counsel and operation. It may be that what has been said, does not amount to a strict demonstration: but it cannot be denied, that it amounts to a high degree of probability, and even to moral certainty. It is evidence which fully justifies us in confidently drawing the conclusion, that there is one God. It does not leave the slightest ground for suspecting that there are more than one. The mere possibility that there are more, can have no effect upon the question. The possibility is lighter than a feather in the scale, is a mere nonentity, while it is presented

* Paley's Theology, chap. xxv.

to the mind as only a possibility, without even an attempt to prove its reality. With respect to every contingent fact, there is a possibility that it might have been different; but this possibility does not in any degree weaken our belief of it, when it is fully attested. And why should we be one whit more influenced by the statement, that the uniformity of nature proves only a unity of design? especially when, in every other case, from the unity of design we infer the unity of the Agent or Author. In a composition of great extent, and embracing a variety of topics, if we perceive the same spirit, the same train of sentiment, and the same style, supported from beginning to end, no man would suppose it to be the production of different persons. The critic who should give a hint that after all it might be the work of several individuals, would gain little credit by his conjecture. There is not more wisdom in telling us, that all that can be inferred from the appearances around us, is a unity of design. Sound reason concludes, without hesitation, that as nature is one, so its Author is one.

But this is not the only argument by which the Divine unity is evinced.

First, an argument is drawn from necessary existence. Necessity is simple, uniform, and universal, without any possible difference, deformity, or variety; and all variety or difference of existence must arise from an external cause, be dependent upon, and proportionable to, the efficiency of that cause. Necessity cannot, therefore, be the ground of existence of a number of beings, however similar and agreeing; because without any other difference, even number itself is a manifest deformity or inequality of efficiency or causality. This is the argument of Dr. Clarke, to which he adds, "that to suppose two or more beings existing of themselves, necessarily and independently of each other, implies this plain contradiction, that each of them being independent on the other, they may either of them be supposed to exist alone, so that it will be no contradiction to imagine the other not to exist; and consequently, neither of them will be necessarily existing. Whatsoever, therefore, exists necessarily, is the one simple essence of the self-existing being."*

Again, it is affirmed, that the existence of more gods than one is impossible. Let there be two, it has been said, and let them be called Jupiter and Mars. Neither of them can be acknowledged to be God, unless both be acknowledged to be infinitely perfect. Does then Jupiter possess the same numerical perfections which Mars possesses, or not? If you deny that he does, you do not acknowledge Jupiter to be infinitely perfect, since there are infinite perfections without him, which he cannot claim. It is necessary, if Jupiter is God, that he possess all possible perfections, and consequently those which are in Mars. But how is this possible, unless he be the same Deity with Mars, and consequently there are not two Gods; or unless Jupiter contain in himself, as the cause, the perfections of Mars, and have communicated them to him. But by this supposition, the independence, and therefore the divinity of Mars is destroyed. Hence it appears, that it is not less contradictory to assert, that there are two beings infinitely perfect, than that there are two infinite extensions. But as these could not be without mutually penetrating each other, that is, unless they be in reality one, or neither of them be true extension, so two infinitely perfect beings cannot be conceived, unless the perfections of the one be contained in the other; and consequently, they are in fact, not two, but one, or neither of them is infinitely perfect.

Further, the idea of God is exclusive of participation; it is appropriated to an individual, and does not admit of application to more than one. He is not God, who has any thing above himself, or any thing besides himself, which is not dependent upon him. What do we mean by God, but a Being infinitely perfect, who comprehends in his essence every conceivable excellence, in whom all the attributes of which the human mind has acquired an idea by reflecting upon itself, or by observing other objects, are united and subsist without limit or change? He is not only the First and the Best, but the Greatest of beings, and consequently stands alone in the universe; and when he surveys it from one end to another, can say, "Is there a God besides me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any."* The moment you suppose more than one, you degrade them all, whether few or many, from the rank of divinity. We could conceive a being greater than any of them, a being who had no equal, and was the Supreme Lord of all things in heaven and earth; and to him we should transfer our admiration and reverence. Two equal Gods are a chimera; the equality which is intended to preserve their divinity, would destroy it. There may be more kings than one, because royalty only implies, that each is invested in sovereign authority in his own dominions; but there cannot be a plurality of Gods, because from the nature of things, only one can be possessed of all possible perfection.

In the next place, the unity of God may be proved from this consideration, that the supposition of more than one deprives them all of independence, and, consequently, none of them would accord with the idea which we necessarily form of God as the uncontrolled Ruler of the universe. If there were two Gods, they would be possessed of equal power; for the slightest inequality on the part of either of them, would exclude him from the rank of Deity. It would be impossible, therefore, for the one to act without the consent of the other; or if he should proceed to act according to his own will, he would be immediately opposed by power as great as his own. If it be said, that as both would be perfect in wisdom, they would always concur in their views, all that follows is, that there would be no struggle between them; but still it would be owing to this concert, that either of them could act; and therefore, both would be dependent, each upon the will of the other. How different are such beings from the true God, whose will is the supreme law, who takes counsel only with his own wisdom, who does not wait for opportunities, but acts when he pleases, and sees all his orders readily and punctually obeyed!

In the last place, the unity of God may be maintained on this ground, that there is nothing to lead us to the supposition of a plurality of Gods. Nature, as we have seen, appears to be the production of one almighty Agent; and for all the effects which we observe, one such Agent was sufficient. It is a principle of science, that "more causes of natural things are not to be admitted, than are both true and sufficient for explaining their phenomena;" and if this rule holds good in the investigations of philosophy, it is of equal authority in Theology. Having ascertained that there exists one Being possessed of infinite perfection, why should we think of another? The existence of another would throw no light upon the system of things, explain no appearance, account for no effect. It would introduce confusion into our thoughts, as we should be unable to tell how the constitution of the universe gave notice of only one, although there were in reality two; and we should be at a loss to know, without special information, to whom we owed our existence, and the tribute of gratitude and obedience. The power of one all-perfect Being was sufficient to create the heavens and the earth; the wisdom of one Being whose understanding is infinite, is sufficient to govern them; the goodness of one Being whose resources are inexhaus-

* Clarke's Discourse concerning the Being of God, p. 47.

* Is. xliv. 8.

tible, is sufficient to supply the wants of all animated creatures. One Being possessed of these attributes is sufficient to conduct us in the path of life, to protect us from evil, to excite and realize our most elevated hopes. Another God would be superfluous and useless.

To the doctrine of the divine unity, there are opposed polytheism, dualism, and, in the opinion of some, the doctrine of the Trinity.

First, the divine unity is opposed to the opinion of heathens, ancient and modern, who, with much diversity in their respective systems, have agreed in the belief of a multiplicity of gods. Whether idolatry began before the flood, we have no means of determining from the brief history which Moses has given of the antediluvian world; but we know that it made its appearance not very long after that event, for the family of Abraham were worshippers of strange gods, at the time when he was called to leave his country and his kindred. Of its origin, or the manner in which it arose, we have no particular account. It is one of the singular opinions of Hume, that "polytheism was the primary religion of men. Mankind, in the earlier ages, were incapable of such reasoning as would have led them to the belief of one Supreme Being: and when, leaving the works of nature, they traced the footsteps of invisible power in the various and contrary events of human life, they necessarily fell into polytheism, and the acknowledgment of several limited and imperfect Deities."* His hypothesis is founded, as we might expect, upon a total disregard of the authority of Scripture; and assumes, according to the dream of some philosophers which is fit only to amuse children, that the human race originally existed in a savage state, without reason as well as without revelation; and arrived step by step at the knowledge which they at present possess. On the contrary, we believe that Theism was the primary religion of men, and that the various forms of idolatry which were gradually introduced, were so many corruptions of it. It is probable that, dazzled by the splendour of the heavenly bodies, men began to do homage to them as visible representatives of the Deity, and that from their real or apparent motions, they came to conceive them to be animated, and ascribed divinity to them. This kind of idolatry had commenced in the days of Job. "If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand, this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above."† Imagination thus awakened, and freed from the control of reason, was active in peopling every region of the earth with its own shadowy productions. The various operations of nature were no longer understood to be the various operations of one almighty Agent, but to be carried on by a multiplicity of agents, who were distinguished by peculiar attributes, and had different provinces and offices assigned to them. One launched the thunderbolt, and another governed the winds; one ruled the sea, and another the dry land; woods, mountains, springs, rivers, gardens, fields, had all their tutelar gods. Poets, who may be called the theologians of heathenism, enlarged and embellished the system by their elegant fictions. Great additions were made to the catalogue of deities by mistaken admiration and gratitude. Those who had been distinguished by eminent talents, illustrious achievements, and actions honourable and beneficial to their respective countries, were after their death not only celebrated in songs and by festivals, but were elevated to the celestial regions, and invested with authority over the affairs of this lower world. The heaven of the ancient heathens was filled with heroes, legislators, and the inventors of useful arts.

Men, not willing to retain God in their knowledge, became vain in their imaginations, and proceeded to worship and serve the creature instead of the Creator. The true God was invisible, and they wished a God whom they could see. Hence they adored the heavenly bodies, the sun, the bright ruler of the day, and the moon, the planets and the stars, whose lustre cheered the darkness of the night. But as these deities were too distant from them in nature and in place, their weakness and wants led to a greater degradation; and gods were devised who more nearly resembled themselves, corporeal gods in human shape, who were nourished with food and drink, occasionally mingled with mortals, and were actuated by the same passions which distinguished the meanest of their worshippers.

It is unnecessary to produce a single argument in refutation of heathen idolatry. It has been banished from every country, where reason has been restored to its proper authority by the aid of revelation; and subsists under various modifications, only among those nations in which gross ignorance prevails.

It is worthy of attention, that amidst the errors of the heathen world, some traces are discovered of the original belief, in the notion which generally obtained of a Supreme Deity. Even by the vulgar, who had sunk into the grossest idolatry, one Deity was acknowledged to be superior to the other objects of religious respect, and was honoured with the title of the Father of gods and men. Some of the philosophers approached nearer the truth, and conceived an idea of God as infinitely superior to the popular divinities; as a Being incorporeal, invisible, and incomprehensible, possessed of all perfections, and to be adored by devout meditation. Many passages expressive of this sentiment have been collected from their writings by the industry of learned men. Pythagoras called God Monas or Unity, and said, "αρχην μεν απαντων μοναδα, that unity is the first principle of all things." Plato declares that polytheism is contrary to reason, and Plutarch, that there cannot be many gods. To add no more, Maximus Tyrius informs us, "that amidst the war of opinions about many subjects, we may find this one law in all the earth, that God is one, the king and father of all, and that the many gods are his children, who rule with him. These things the Greek says and the barbarian, the inhabitant of the Continent and of the Island, the wise and the unwise."

Secondly, the divine unity is opposed to dualism, or the doctrine of two principles, which was held by the ancient Persians, and was adopted by certain heretics, in the early ages of the church, and particularly by Manes, who incorporated with it a variety of notions borrowed from the Christian system. In general, dualism consisted in maintaining, that there were two principles, called by the Persians Ormusd and Ahriman, who were either independent beings, or were produced from all eternity by the first original Being. The former dwelt in light, and the latter in darkness. Ormusd created man capable of virtue, and furnished his habitation with the materials of happiness; but Ahriman introduced evil and misery. Hence there is a perpetual struggle between them, which will terminate in the victory of light over darkness. The following words of Isaiah are understood to refer to the religious system of the Persians, who, in the age when he flourished, believed in two independent principles or supreme beings: but Zoroaster, the reformer of their theology, introduced a superior being from whom both were derived. They are addressed to Cyrus the king of Persia. "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me; that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I the

* See his Natural History of Religion. † Job. xxxi. 26—28.

Lord do all these things."* It is probable that the system as reformed by Zoroaster, who is supposed to have had an intercourse with the Jews, was founded on the tradition of one Supreme God, and angels created by him, some of whom are good, and others bad; and that in its original form, as teaching two independent beings, of whom the one was the author of good, and the other of evil, it was a corruption of the tradition concerning God and that apostate spirit, who brought sin and death into the world. It is evident, that if this was its origin, the doctrine of Scripture was grossly misapprehended. Satan, whom the Persians called Ahriman, the principle of darkness, was not created evil, but became evil by his own choice; he is not an independent agent, but although engaged in constant opposition to God, the principle of light, is subject to his control, can do nothing without his permission, nor is able by his most violent efforts to pass the limits which are assigned to him.

The doctrine of dualism rests upon the mixed state of things in our world, as its only support. There are appearances which might lead hasty reasoners to conclude that it has originated from two opposite causes. Good and evil are blended together. If man is capable of virtue, he is capable also of vice; and indeed is so prone to it, that a general corruption of manners prevails. He is hurried headlong by his appetites to abuse the gifts of the divine bounty, and stimulated by his passions to deeds of violence and cruelty. Can such a creature be the work, or exclusively the work of Him, whom reason represents to us as all goodness and purity? And how can he be the Creator and sole Governor of such a world as this? The earth is encumbered with rocks, covered with barren sands, produces briers and thorns, and poisonous herbs; is infested with ferocious and venomous animals, and in many places is uninhabitable on account of heat, or cold, or pestilential vapours. Nature is subject to terrible convulsions; the ocean encroaches upon the land; rain descending in torrents inundates the fields; storms and earthquakes spread devastation over provinces and kingdoms; disease, sorrow, and death, make havoc of the human race in the northern and southern hemispheres. Is there not a malignant power at work to counteract the beneficent designs of the good Being?

It is acknowledged, that the appearance of things might create doubts in the minds of superficial observers; but it is capable of a satisfactory explanation upon the principles of sound reason, especially as illustrated and confirmed by revelation. Man is a free agent, as our own consciousness assures us; he is not fixed to a particular choice, but among the objects presented to him, he may reject one, and give the preference to another. He is, therefore, a mutable being; and although it may be difficult to trace the process by which a creature, perfectly virtuous, first deviated from rectitude, yet being acquainted with the constitution of human nature, we are at no loss to understand in general, how moral evil found its way into the world. It is not the effect of an original mixture of good and evil in our frame by two contending principles, who were both concerned in its formation, but it is the result of an improper use of the liberty with which we were endowed. Man is the work of God, and when he came from his hands, was the bright image of his holiness; moral pollution does not belong to his essence, but is an accident; he has himself stained his pristine glory, and covered himself with shame.

If the existence of moral evil can be reconciled with the belief of one God, holy, just, and good, there is no difficulty in shewing the consistency of the existence of physical evil with the doctrine of the unity. What some men would call imperfections in the works of nature, do not at present come under our consideration. It cannot be proved, we presume, that there are any such; but on the supposition that imperfections could be pointed out, they would not impeach the unity, but the power or the wisdom of the Creator. Our concern is with those facts alone which might be conceived to indicate a different agent. It is plain that such an inference cannot be deduced from physical evils, the sterility and ruggedness of the soil, inclement seasons, and the long train of diseases and casualties to which mankind are subject; because if moral evil exists, these are its natural consequences, or consequences which might be expected to follow it under the Divine administration. It would be absurd to expect the habitation of guilty creatures to be a paradise. Knowing their character beforehand, we should have expected it to be what it is; or rather, we should have formed the idea of a world less beautiful, and more sparingly stored with accommodations, or of one darkened by the frown of its Maker, having the signatures of his wrath impressed upon every part of it. It would never have occurred to us, that its thorns and briers, its pains and dangers, were the contrivances of a different being. It is extreme folly to go about, as some do, to soften down the evils which exist into some kind of harmony with the beneficent character of the Deity. This is not necessary to our present argument, unless it were ascertained that goodness is his only attribute; and the attempt is vain, for the things complained of have been regarded, in all ages, as evils, and were meant to be evils, by our righteous Judge, as none can doubt who give credit to the testimony of Scripture. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."* The earth, when contemplated in the light of religion, exhibits no appearance of a divided empire, where two beings of opposite characters contend for the mastery; it is a rebellious province, in which both mercy and severity are displayed, and the authority of the rightful Sovereign is maintained, by wholesome discipline and necessary punishments.

Lastly, the divine unity is opposed, in the opinion of some, by the doctrine of the Trinity. The Scriptures seem to teach, and most Christians believe, that there are three persons in one undivided essence. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. To each of these persons, understanding, will, and power are ascribed, and they are farther distinguished by peculiar properties and operations. Now, say the adversaries of this doctrine, whatever countenance it may receive from the figurative language of Scripture, it cannot be true, because it is absolutely inconsistent with the unity of God; for how is it possible to conceive three distinct persons, without conceiving them to be three distinct beings? Hence they conclude, that the dogma of the Trinity ought to be rejected as subversive of this primary article of religion, and contrary to the clearest dictates of reason.

If we fully understood this subject, and could certainly pronounce the Trinity to be incompatible with the Unity, we should be under the necessity either of renouncing those passages of Scripture in which it is taught, as uninspired, or of putting a different interpretation upon them. It is plain that the same thing cannot be one and three in the same respect; and were this the doctrine commonly held concerning God, there would be no presumption in rejecting it as impossible. But it is well known that this is a gross misrepresen-

* Is. xiv. 5—7.

* Gen. iii. 17—19.

tation, and that Trinitarians believe God to be one in one sense, and three in another. There is an error into which men are in danger of falling, which is committed by the opponents of this doctrine, and it consists in transferring to the Creator notions derived from their knowledge of creatures. We find that every living creature is an individual; that every man is a single person; and hence the ideas of one nature and one person are intimately and inseparably conjoined in our thoughts. These ideas we carry with us, when God is the subject of contemplation; and forgetting the infinite disparity between him and ourselves, we suppose that there can be nothing in his nature which is not in ours. It is a greater error than if a fly, endowed with thought, should make itself a standard to man, and maintain that he could possess no quality to which there was not something corresponding in its own constitution.

In some instances, we are compelled to admit that there are certain properties of the Divine nature which have no counterpart in us. We and all other creatures are limited in being and powers, and are confined to a place; but his essence and attributes are infinite, and he is present in every part of the universe. The duration of creatures is measured by time, or a succession of instants: but in the duration of him who is without beginning as well as without end, there can be no succession, for reasons formerly explained. These are as great mysteries, and seem to be as repugnant to reason as the doctrine of the Trinity. How long will it be till some men are convinced of the weakness of the human intellect, by considering the objects around them, none of which they are able to comprehend? How long will it be till they learn one of the first lessons of philosophy, that we cannot penetrate into the essence of things, and must content ourselves with the simple knowledge of facts?

If there is satisfactory proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, and what higher evidence can we demand respecting the nature of God than his own testimony, we are bound to receive it without disputing, and to believe that a plurality of persons is consistent with unity of essence, although we do not know how to reconcile them. It is no excess of humility in creatures, who have just begun to open their eyes and to look around them, to acknowledge that things may be, of which they can form no conception; that there may be truths which their minds cannot grasp; that between finite beings, and Him who is infinite, no comparison can be instituted; and consequently, that a conclusion founded on the supposition that the one is the measure of the other, is presumptuous and false.

The doctrine of the unity settles religion upon a firm and immoveable foundation. We experience nothing of the uncertainty and anxiety which distressed the ancient heathens, who, amidst a multitude of gods, were sometimes at a loss to determine whom it was necessary to propitiate, by whose hand evils had been inflicted, and benefits bestowed. Knowing that there is only one God, we assure ourselves of his presence in every place, and of his agency in every event. If there is evil in the city, he has done it; and if good come, it can be traced to his bounty. Whithersoever we go, his eye beholds, and his power sustains us. It is his goodness which smiles around us in the fair scenes of creation; it is his inspiration which excites worthy thoughts in our minds, and devout affections in our hearts. We know to whom we should turn in the hour of difficulty, and to whom the tribute of our grateful hearts should be paid. "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One."*

* Is. xl. 22, 25.

LECTURE XIX.

ON GOD.

Immensity of God: denied by some—Definition of Immensity; distinguished from Omnipresence; proofs of Immensity—Distinguished from Infinite Extension—Unwarrantable Speculations respecting it—Presence of God with his Creatures—Practical Reflections.

Our inquiries concerning the existence and unity of God, are not mere speculations which have no connection with our duty and our happiness. Whether there is a living intelligent Being, possessed of every possible perfection, would be a point which we might spare ourselves the labour of ascertaining, if the investigation were to terminate in the simple knowledge of the fact. It is inconceivable, however, that a subject, confessedly the most sublime which the mind can contemplate, should be so barren of advantage. If there is a God, infinite in excellence, and the Parent of the universe, there must subsist certain relations between him and men, whose existence and faculties are the gifts of his bounty: there must be duties arising from those relations, which the law of our nature binds us to perform; and there are expectations excited by the experience of his goodness, which almighty power can realize. It is natural therefore to ask, Where is this great Being so worthy of our admiration and homage, that we may offer to him our tribute of adoration and thanksgiving, and, with all humility, supplicate his favour and protection? With a devout man in ancient times, we may say, "Oh that we knew where we might find him! that we might come even to his seat."* Is he afar off, or is he near? Is he on earth, or in heaven? If there is some region of the universe which he has chosen as his habitation, it may be so distant that our feeble voice cannot reach it, nor can his arm be extended to us.

The heathens who multiplied their deities, conceived them to be limited beings, who were confined to particular places, and had different provinces assigned to them. We have proofs of these unworthy ideas especially in the writings of the poets. They prevailed not only among the Greeks and Romans, but among other nations; and hence we find, that when the Syrians had been defeated by the Israelites, supposing Jehovah to be only a local Deity, they said to their king, "Their Gods are Gods of the hills, therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they."† Such of them, however, as rising above the vulgar superstition, approximated to more just conceptions of the Supreme Being, seem to have entertained some notion of his universal presence. "Quocunque te flexeris," says Seneca, "ibi illum videbis occurrentem tibi: nihil ab illo vacat; opus suum ipse implet."‡ We meet him every where: no place is without him; he fills his own work. Virgil too has these well-known lines:

> Deum namque ire per omnes
> Terrasque, tractusque maris, cœlumque profundum.‖

But we should remember when such passages occur, that they admit of an interpretation different from what the words suggest to us; for, by some of the philosophers, God was supposed to be the soul of the world, diffused through all its parts, and consequently a material Being.

Mahomet must have believed that God had a bodily shape and a local residence, since he pretended to have seen him when he was taken up into heaven, and tells us that between his eyebrows the distance was equal

* Job xxiii. 3. † 1 Kings xx. 23. ‡ Benefic. Lib. iv. 8.
‖ Virg. Georg. iv. 221. For God pervades all lands, the fields of ocean, and the lofty heavens.

to a journey of three days. Some of the elder Socinians appear to have fallen into the same gross error; and Biddle, against whom Dr. Owen wrote his book entitled, Vindiciæ Evangelicæ, maintained that "God glisters with glory, and is resident in a certain place of the heavens, so that we may distinguish between his right and left hand by bodily sight."* In the Racovian catechism, or the catechism of the Socinian churches in Poland, the immensity of God is defined to be, "the highest perfection of his dominion, power, wisdom, and providence, extending to all things, and excluded from no place."† Nothing is said respecting the immensity of his essence.

In opposition to all these opinions, we maintain not only that God knows all things, and rules over all things, but that he is present in all places, and with all creatures at all times; or in other words, that he is infinite in essence as well as in wisdom and power. Bodies exist in space, which has been defined to be, "extension void of matter or body, and capable of receiving or containing matter or body." A particular body occupies only a portion of space; there are other portions of space where it is not. As body consists of parts, its limits are exactly defined. It has length, breadth and thickness; and the lines terminating these constitute figure. The earth, the sun, mountains, trees, and men, fill certain parts of space, and may be seen from other parts of space, but in these they do not exist. All this is quite obvious; but we find greater difficulty when we proceed to speak of spirits, because, as they have no parts, no dimensions and figure, we do not understand their relation to space. Of this, however, we are certain, that, to use the language of the Schools, they also have an ubi; so that the question may be asked, Where are they? and an answer may be returned, that they are here, and not there. They do not fill the place where they are, because they are not material; but they are so in it, as not to be in any other place. This is plain with respect to our own spirits. They are so connected with our bodies, that they are where these are, and no where else. In consequence of their presence in a particular place, they can perceive objects within a limited sphere; but beyond it their perception does not extend. They are insulated, and can neither act nor be acted upon by objects at a certain distance, unless they are brought near, or some mode of communication with them is established. There is no doubt, that all other created spirits exist in the same manner in a place. This we are explicitly taught concerning angels, who are represented as moving from place to place and as at one time in heaven and at another time on earth. But you cannot ask, Where is God? if you mean that he may be in one place and not in another. His presence is not local; it is universal. "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."‡

A distinction is made between the immensity, and the omnipresence or ubiquity of God. When we call his essence immense, we mean that it has no limits; when we say that it is omnipresent, we signify that it is wherever creatures are. These propositions are not the same, unless creation be infinite; but although we cannot trace its boundaries, and its extent surpasses all calculation, yet there is this objection against supposing it to be absolutely unlimited, that it would be to suppose every part to be finite, but the whole infinite. By the same reasoning which proves that there could not be an eternal succession of beings, each of which began to exist, it is proved that the whole mass of coexisting created beings cannot be infinite. The attributes of God are distinguished into absolute and relative. His absolute attributes are those which may be considered without the supposition of any other thing; his relative attributes are those, the exercise of which supposes the existence of other beings, to whom they have a respect. Immensity is an absolute perfection; it belongs to his essence, which, as it necessarily exists, is necessarily infinite. Omnipresence is a relative perfection; for, to say that he is present with all things, supposes that other things exist besides himself. At the same time, this statement is so far inaccurate, as it may seem to imply that immensity and omnipresence are different; for they are, in truth, the same perfection under different aspects. Omnipresence is merely the relation of immensity to the universe; and all that we assert is, that God is present wherever his creatures are, but his essence is not bounded by creation; for he is present where no creatures are, and consequently, if new worlds were created, would be present also with them.

Some have attempted to prove the immensity of God from his necessary existence. He exists by an absolute necessity of nature, and by the same necessity he is infinite. This necessity being absolute in itself, it has been said, and not depending upon any external cause, it is evident that it must be every where, as well as always unalterably the same; or to express the idea more plainly, this necessity is the reason of his existence in every place, as well as throughout all duration. A necessity which is not every where the same, is plainly a consequential necessity only, depending upon some external cause and not an absolute one in its own nature; for, a necessity absolutely such in itself, has no relation to time and place, or any thing else. Whatever therefore exists by an absolute necessity in its own nature, must needs be infinite as well as eternal. To suppose a finite being to be self-existent, is to say that it is a contradiction for that being not to exist, while its absence or non-existence may be conceived without any contradiction; which is the greatest absurdity in the world. For, if a being can without a contradiction be absent from one place, it may without a contradiction be absent likewise from another place, and from all places; and whatever necessity it may have of existing, must arise from some external cause, and not absolutely from itself; and, consequently, the being cannot be self-existent. We can conceive no reason why a necessary being should be in one place, and not in another. To suppose it to be finite, supposes some cause which determined that it should possess such a quantity of being, and no more. That cause must either be a voluntary cause, or else such a necessary cause, the quantity of whose power is determined and limited by some other cause. But in an original absolute necessity, antecedent in the order of nature to the existence of any thing, nothing of all this can take place, but the necessity is necessarily every where alike.

I have stated this argument nearly in the words of Dr. Clarke.* Its abstruseness renders it difficult of apprehension, and altogether useless to the great majority of mankind. It has even not given complete satisfaction to some who were as profound as himself. It is plain, I think, that no reason can be conceived why a necessary being should be limited; and that limitation presupposes a prior cause, by which the measure of any thing is determined. I confess, however, that I do not understand the meaning of making necessity in the order of nature antecedent to the existence of God. Such necessity is an abstraction of which I can form no idea, and seems to me as unintelligible as the Fate of the heathens, to which gods and men were

* Owen's Vind. Evang. Chap. ii.
† Catechesis Eccles. Polon. Sect. iii. *de Dei natura*, chap. i.
‡ Jer. xxiii. 23, 24.

* Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God, p. 44.

alike subject. Both, I suspect, are words, and nothing more.

I proceed to lay before you arguments which are more level to common capacities.

In the first place, it has been already observed, that when we speak of God, we mean a Being possessed of every possible perfection; because if only one were wanting, we could conceive another being still more perfect than he to whom we had first directed our attention; and that other would be God. We unite in one assemblage all the excellencies which we observe in creatures, free from mixture and limitation; we join to these every other excellence which we can conceive, although in creatures no trace of it should appear; and we refer all, whether communicable or incommunicable, to the Divine nature, as their proper and original subject. Now, the limited nature of creatures is evidently an imperfection; and it is because such is our judgment, that we consider those creatures which can, if I may speak so, enlarge their being by the power of locomotion, as having an advantage above those which are fixed to a particular place. If vegetables were sentient beings, we should deem animals superior to them, for this single reason, that they were not like them attached to the soil. And among the qualities which exalt angels above men, this is one, that although they cannot be in more places than one at the same time, yet they can pass from heaven to earth, and successively visit the various parts of creation. The limited nature of man is manifestly the cause of his imperfection. His sensations, enjoyments, and operations, are confined to a narrow sphere, beyond which events are taking place over which he has no control, and sources of happiness exist, from which he can draw no supply. Hence fancy in its dreams has sometimes, with a view to remedy this defect, invested him with a power to transport himself from place to place at his pleasure. The result is, that in our opinion it is better for a being to be in many places than in few, to be in all places than in many. To suppose, therefore, God to exist only in one part of the universe, to be in heaven but not upon earth, to circumscribe his essence within any boundaries however widely extended, would be to conceive of him as similar to his creatures. It would be easy to imagine a being still more perfect, for certainly he would be more perfect who was present at the same time in heaven and on earth. Thus it appears that it is agreeable to reason to ascribe immensity to God.

In the second place, immensity is necessarily implied in the other perfections of the divine nature; or those perfections are such, that unless the divine nature were immense, they would not belong to it. What the perfections of God are, and that he is actually possessed of them, will be afterwards shewn; and in the mean time, we may be permitted to assume their existence. Every sound theist ascribes infinite perfections to God, infinite power, infinite wisdom, infinite goodness, and consequently must believe his essence to be infinite; for it would be a manifest absurdity to suppose a Being to have infinite perfections and a finite nature, to be limited and unlimited at the same time. It is one of our clearest conceptions, that the degree of any quality must be relative to the nature in which it is inherent, as the effect is proportioned to the cause. We are sometimes surprised to find a degree of power in certain creatures, much exceeding what their appearance had led us to expect; but we are never led to think that it may be indefinitely increased so as to be equal to every possible effect. It will be readily granted, that the divine understanding is infinite, or that God knows all things throughout the whole extent of the creation. The question of the Psalmist contains its own answer: "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?"* The source of intelligence must be an intelligent Being; the Maker of all things must be acquainted with his own works. But how should he know every thing in the universe, ample as its boundaries are, and innumerable as are the substances of which it is composed, if he had a local habitation in a particular portion of space? Some things would be too distant to be seen, or too minute to be observed, or transacted in such secrecy as to be unknown to all who were not present on the spot. The universal and particular knowledge of God, his knowledge of all creatures without the exception of the least or the most obscure, and of all the circumstances relating to them, endlessly diversified and often too subtile and slender to be the objects of human observation, presupposes his immediate presence on the scene of their existence. There is no intelligible way of accounting for his infinite knowledge, but that of the Psalmist: "Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me."† I might farther illustrate this point, by shewing that the almighty power of God presupposes the infinity of his essence, but the observations which might be made will occur under the next argument.

In the third place, the immensity of the Divine Being may be proved from his works. The creation of all things out of nothing, required almighty power. The power of God is not something distinct from his essence, but is his essence itself in energy, or God himself working. But we cannot conceive any being to act where it is not; the action of every being with which we are acquainted, supposes its presence. The actions of men are confined to the spot on which they reside; and if they are said to act at a distance, it is in a figurative sense, because their orders are executed by persons employed in their service. But God made use of no ministers, or subordinate agents, in the work of creation, and must therefore have been present in every portion of space where any being exists besides himself.

If we turn our attention to the providential government of the universe, we shall be led to the same conclusion respecting the omnipresence of God. Reason and revelation concur in bearing testimony to this truth, that the system of nature is sustained by the same power which raised it out of nothing. To imagine, that after it was arranged and subjected to certain laws, it was left to itself, and that it moves, like a well constructed machine, without requiring the interference of the artist is an opinion which no man would adopt after due reflection, and which in reality renders the universe independent of its Maker. The laws of nature, to which its order and preservation are ascribed, are nothing but the established and uniform methods according to which his power is exerted. But where the effect is, there also must be the cause; where we see displays of power, there we should seek for him to whom the power belongs. We observe a variety of changes taking place, and we can often discover the immediate causes or antecedents; but we do not perceive the link which connects them. We know that power is exerted; but the more we reflect, the more we are convinced that the conclusion of sound philosophy is just that it is not the power of creatures but of the Creator. All the movements which we observe in the universe, are so many proofs of a present Deity. Although he is not visible to mortal eyes, yet all nature proclaims him to be near.

Where, I ask, is the region in which God may not be found? Go to the most dismal spot upon the globe;

* Psalm xciv. 9, 10. † Psalm cxxxix. 3—5.

to a spot, if such exists, where no plant vegetates, and no animal breathes; in this dreary solitude you shall trace him in the eternal snow which covers it, in the rocks which rear their dark pinnacles to the sky, and in the waves which beat upon its melancholy shores! Retire to a wilderness impressed with no mark of human footsteps, and you shall perceive him in every thing which lives, in the waving grass and the flowers which "waste their sweetness in the desert air;" for all live, and move, and have their being in him! Lift your eyes to the heavens, and contemplate the splendid bodies which are scattered there in magnificent profusion. Remark their number, their magnitude, their revolutions, and their order; and then tell me, what could sustain them, what could guide them in their course, what could prevent them from running to confusion, but the arm of Omnipotence which holds them in its grasp? Look into the abysses of space at a distance from us which overpower the imagination: who kindled the living fires with which they glow? who nourishes the flame which has burned with undiminished brightness for thousands of years? Is it not the same Being who breathed into our nostrils the breath of life? "Every thing which you see, is God," said an ancient poet. We may object to his language, as confounding the Worker with his works; but with a slight alteration we may say, that every object which meets our eye on the surface of the earth, and in the expanse above us, announces the presence of God. By him the sun shines, the winds blow, the earth is clothed with vegetation, and the tides of the ocean rise and fall. Every where he exists in the fulness of perfection. The universe is a magnificent temple, erected by his own hands, in which He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, manifests himself to his intelligent creatures. The Divine inhabitant fills it, and every part shines with his glory.

It may occur to you, that these arguments prove only the omnipresence of God, or his presence throughout the whole creation, to know, to uphold, and to govern it. It is acknowledged that this is the amount of the evidence; but no person, I presume, who has gone so far, will choose to stop and say, This is the limit of creation, and the limit also of the Divine essence. No reason could be assigned for circumscribing it; but as we have found it in every step of our progress through the universe, we naturally conclude, that if we could pursue the search, we should find it where it exists alone. He who believes that the power of God is almighty, will not doubt that he could create new worlds, and therefore must admit, that as he could not act where he is not, he is present where no sun shines and no planet rolls. For all practical purposes, it is enough to know that he fills heaven and earth; but truth requires us to acknowledge the absolute immensity of his nature, because if he were bounded by creation, we could conceive a Being still greater, and that Being would be God.

In reflecting upon this subject, great caution is necessary to avoid ideas derogatory to the honour of God, and inconsistent with the spirituality of his nature. Immensity we are apt to confound with extension, because we are accustomed to think only of the presence of bodies which fill space by their dimensions, and can be made to occupy a larger portion of it only by being extended. Thus, light fills the solar system by means of rays propagated in all directions from the sun. In like manner, the atmosphere is diffused over the whole globe, and while it rests in the vallies, surrounds by extension the tops of the highest mountains, being a substance composed of parts placed one beyond another. This idea, so familiar to our minds, we carry along with us in our speculations concerning the Supreme Being, forgetting that as he is a Spirit, it is totally inapplicable. We believe that created spirits have a place, so that it may be said that they are *here*, but not *there*; but we cannot conceive them literally to fill a portion of space, without contradicting ourselves, and assigning to them one of the properties of body at the very moment when we speak of them as incorporeal. No man would say that the soul fills a particular part of the body, or that the place of an angel has dimensions; for it would follow that spirits, like bodies, would be greater or less, that they might be divided, expanded, or compressed; that is, that they are spirits and not spirits; or that there are no such beings as spirits, and those which are called such, are animated matter in an invisible form. To suppose, then, the immensity of the Divine essence to consist in boundless extension, is to materialize the Deity, for that which is extended has parts, and what has parts is not a spirit. Extension consists in the addition of parts, each occupying a certain portion of space. Infinite extension is impossible; the addition of parts might go on for ever, and the aggregate be always increasing, but it could never be actually infinite. When men talk of an infinite series, they cannot mean, if they reflect, a series which at this moment is actually infinite, but a series which is running on *in infinitum*, or never comes to an end. In the nature of things, it cannot be that the Divine essence is infinitely extended. When each part is finite, the whole cannot be infinite.

We must therefore form a different idea of the Divine immensity; or rather, while we deny that the Divine essence is extended, we must acknowledge that we cannot comprehend its immensity. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it."* God, it has been said, is wholly in the whole world, yet so as to be wholly in each of its parts; he co-exists with the world which is divided into parts, but without parts in himself, and in an indivisible manner. Wherever he is, he is wholly in all things, yet beyond all; included in no place, and excluded from none; and not so much in a place, because finite cannot comprehend infinite, as in himself: and hence the Rabbies call him *place*, to intimate that he is not contained in place, but contains all things in himself. The Schoolmen have said that God is every where present *instar puncti*, like a point. Dr. Owen remarks, that their design was to express how God is not in a place, rather than how he is.† He is not present like bodies which have dimensions. Dr. Clarke pronounces the expression to be altogether unintelligible, but adds, "that which we can most safely affirm, and which no atheist can say is absurd, and which nevertheless is sufficient to all wise and good purposes, is this; that whereas all finite and created beings can be present but in one definite place at once, and corporeal beings even in that one place very imperfectly and unequally, to any purpose of power and activity, only by the successive motion of different members and organs; the Supreme Cause, on the contrary, being an infinite and most simple essence, and comprehending all things perfectly in himself, *is at all times equally* present, both in his simple essence, and by the immediate and perfect exercise of all his attributes, to *every point* of the boundless immensity, as if it were really all but one single point."‡

Here we must stop, lest pushing our inquiries too far, we involve ourselves in confusion and darken counsel by words without knowledge. We are in the utmost danger of doing so upon a subject confessedly mysterious; and in attempting to be profound, we may cease to be rational, and make use of expressions which neither we nor any other person can understand. God is present in every point of space after the manner of a spirit, and is present every where in all the fulness of perfection.

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* Psalm cxxxix. 6. † Vindiciæ Evangelicæ, p. 54.
‡ Disc. on Being and Attributes, p. 46.

Some philosophers have indulged themselves in curious speculations about space. God has been called the *substratum* of space; or in other words, as space is supposed to be necessarily existing, and yet is not itself a substance, it supposes a substance of which it is a property, namely God, who exists by necessity of nature. It is true that we cannot conceive space to be annihilated, and it may therefore be said necessarily to exist; but if it were certain that there is no God, its annihilation would still be inconceivable; although in that case it would not be a property of any thing, but would subsist by itself, if it be any thing, and not merely a mode, or the relation of beings to one another in respect of situation. Some have proceeded farther, and maintained that space is God, because it is infinite, eternal, immutable, and self-existent, as well as impassible and indivisible. It has been objected, that if space be God himself, all bodies are situated in God as in their proper place, and each of them occupies a greater or less portion of his essence according to its size; that the Divine Being, although immeasurable as a whole, has millions of parts which are measurable by feet, yards, and miles, and one part of him is larger than another; that every part of space contains the Divine perfections complete, or only a part of them, according to its dimensions, a certain measure of his wisdom, and holiness, and goodness; and that as a spirit is not extended, space can neither be God himself nor a property of his essence, to which it is as absurd to ascribe extension as it would be to ascribe thought to a stone. I have deemed it proper to take notice of these speculations, because they have been broached by ingenious men. They are more curious than useful, and perhaps they would be more justly characterized as presumptuous. We can hardly, in speaking of them, avoid expressing ourselves in a manner not very consistent with the reverence due to that great and awful Being in whose presence we constantly are.

The omnipresence of God does not imply that his essence is mixed with his creatures, as the atmosphere is in contact with the various substances upon earth, enters into the bodies of animals and vegetables, and is incorporated with them. He is indeed most intimately present with them, more intimately present than they are with one another. He is around them, if we may speak so, and within them; he resides in the inmost recesses of their souls; he animates them, upholds them, and exerts his energy throughout their whole frame; but still between him and them there is a perfect and eternal distinction. His presence neither deifies them, nor makes him a partaker of their infirmities. He is not a component part of the universe, as they supposed who believed him to be the soul of the world; he holds it in the hollow of his hand, to use the sublime language of Scripture, but is as completely separated from it, as if he dwelt beyond its boundaries: he fills it, but without commixtion. It by no means follows from the immensity of God, that we may address our prayers to particular parts of the universe, as some have alleged, pleading in favour of idolatry, that creatures may be worshipped because the Creator is present in them. It is indeed a proper conclusion from this doctrine that our worship should not be confined to a particular spot, because throughout the whole world he is equally near to us in his essence and perfections, ready to hear us, and able to help us. But the argument, that a creature may be worshipped on account of his presence with it, is obviously false for this reason, that although he is with and in that creature, it does not partake of his essence, and is endowed with none of his perfections. God is as distinct from it as if he were separated by local distance; and the argument, by concluding too much, concludes nothing. It would convert all the parts of nature into objects of worship, because God is as much present with the meanest reptile as with the highest spirit, with the clods of the valley as with the sun in the heavens.

Again, we must not suppose, that in consequence of his presence with creatures, God is affected by them, as we are by the objects which are near to us. Some objects are disagreeable to our senses, and cause pain or disgust; and various emotions are excited in our minds by external things as well as by our own thoughts. Our happiness is in a great measure dependent upon the influences to which we are exposed; and we find it difficult, if not impossible, to abstract ourselves from the circumstances in which we are placed. But the Divine nature is not passive, or liable to impressions; and hence, in the language of the schools, God is a pure act, always in energy but never acted upon. With respect to material objects, it is certain that their general power to affect us arises from the material organs of our bodies, and their particular effect is owing to our peculiar constitution. We cannot conceive, that if we were pure spirits, matter could operate upon us as it does at present; and it is even certain, that if our organs had been differently formed, substances and objects which are offensive to us would have been grateful. This is evident from the history of animated beings, among which we discover a great variety of habits and tastes; so that places which some shun are the favourite resorts of others, and substances which one rejects, furnish high gratification to another. No error, therefore, could be more gross than to think, that it would in any degree impair the happiness of God to be present in places which would excite uneasy sensations in us. These sensations are merely relative, and besides are excited by means of corporeal organs; and, consequently, we judge of God by ourselves, when we imagine that one place would be less agreeable to him than another. Our minds also are subject to impressions from the conversation, the conduct, and the condition of our fellow men, all which are calculated to make us cheerful or melancholy, to incite us to good or to tempt us to evil. But an infinitely perfect and independent Being, is an undisturbed spectator of human things. As a moral Being, he approves or disapproves, yet without any commotion of mind; and his peace is not more affected than ours is by the sportive flight, the contests and the sufferings of insects. The praises of mortals add nothing to his blessedness, which is already perfect; nor do their crimes and blasphemies diminish it. He is in heaven, on earth, and in hell; but independent of time and place, he enjoys the profound repose of all-sufficiency. We change him into a being like ourselves, when we fear lest his intimate presence with creatures should degrade his dignity or interrupt his felicity. "If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thy hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man."*

The doctrine of the Divine omnipresence is not inconsistent with those passages of Scripture, which represent God as peculiarly present in certain places and with certain individuals. To superficial thinkers, it may seem to be an objection that he is said to have resided in the temple of Jerusalem; to be in the souls of good men, and to dwell in the heaven of heavens. A very little attention is sufficient to a right understanding of such expressions. It is obvious that they were not intended to suggest the idea that the Divine essence is confined to any of those places, because, while God is said to be in one of them, he is said at the same time to be in the others; to be in heaven, for example, while he was in the temple; to be with angels in glo-

* Job xxxv. 6—8.

ry, as well as with men upon earth; to be with all good men scattered over the surface of the globe, and not merely with one or two living together. The design plainly is to state, that in the places referred to, there are particular manifestations of his glory. He was present in the temple by a visible symbol, a brightness which appeared between the cherubim in the holy of holies. Go now to the spot on which it stood, and you shall see no token of him more than in the dark recess of a heathen temple; but God is still there in his invisible and mysterious essence. He is present in the souls of good men by the operations of his Spirit, who illuminates, sanctifies, and comforts them; but he is present also in the souls of bad men, although he does not reveal himself by the gracious exertion of his power. He is present in heaven by a clearer and more impressive display of his infinite excellencies, and more ample emanations of his love, than he has given in any other part of creation; but he is present also in hell, where the terrors of his power and justice are manifested in the punishment of the finally impenitent. In respect of his essence, there is no place where God is more present than in another, nor any person to whom he is nearer than to another. But, in some places, he discovers himself more distinctly to the external senses, or the internal feelings of his creatures; there are openings in the cloud, through which the rays of light are transmitted, and turning our eyes to them, we say, God is there, without supposing that he is not where we do not perceive him. I conclude with the words of the Psalmist: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."*

The doctrine of the Divine immensity furnishes a powerful motive to restrain us from sin. We are continually in the presence of God, and every deviation from his law exposes us to his displeasure. When men are about to commit iniquity, they retire into their closets, and shut the door, or seek out some other solitary place where there is no spectator. They look this way and that way, that there may be no witness of their unlawful deeds; and having thus secured themselves, they dismiss all fear. But let them stop, and look again. Is there not One near who has escaped their observation, because he appears only to the eye of the mind, and who is more to be dreaded than ten thousand human witnesses? Yes; there is an eye which sees them in the darkest recess, and which menaces with death and eternal misery every soul of man that doth evil. And where shall they find a refuge from his vengeance? "Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down."†

Again, from the omnipresence of God there arises a powerful argument for sincerity in religion, because he is not only around us to take notice of our actions, but within us to observe our thoughts and volitions. Men may mistake our motives; but his judgment is necessarily unerring, because the whole case is before him. He approves, and will reward the upright, whatever uncharitable constructions an uncandid world may put upon their conduct: He abhors, and will expose to public scorn the hypocrite, who gained the applause of virtue by his studied and successful imitation of it. How justly does he deserve his doom! he is guilty; and how audacious is his impiety! he is guilty of acting a base part, under the immediate inspection of the Searcher of hearts.

Lastly, to the righteous this doctrine is a source of abundant consolation. In every place they meet a friend, a protector, and a father. Does the voice of thunder, or the raging of the ocean, or the fury of the tempest, announce his presence? They have nothing to fear, for love to them presides over the commotions of the elements. Do they perceive Him in the more tranquil scenes of nature, in the silent progress of vegetation, in the smiles of the heavens, and in the regular beneficence which supplies their returning wants, and diffuses so much happiness among all classes of animated beings? Oh! how delightful the thought that He, in whom they repose confidence, is so near that they may always assure themselves of ready and effectual aid! This thought is fitted to enliven every scene, and to sweeten every condition. It will make the springs of joy burst out in the parched and thirsty wilderness, and clothe the naked and cheerless waste with verdure. It will give a relish to a dry morsel, and a cup of cold water. It will lighten the pressure of poverty, and soothe the pangs of affliction. It will dissipate the horrors of a dungeon, and console the exile from his country and his friends. How transporting the thought, that we cannot go where God is not! A good man may be bereaved of his reputation, his liberty, his earthly all; but the deadly hatred of his enemies can never so far succeed as to draw from him the mournful complaint, "Ye have taken away my God, and what have I more?" With whatever afflictions his faith and patience may be tried, and whatever change of circumstances a wise providence may appoint him to undergo, although there should be no human heart to sympathise with him, and no kind hand to perform the offices of friendship, he can express his faith and joy in the words of an ancient saint, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou holdest me by my right hand. Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and afterward receive me to thy glory."*

* Ps. cxxxix. 7—12. † Amos. ix. 2.

* Ps. lxxiii. 23, 24.

LECTURE XX.

ON GOD.

Immutability of God—Proofs—Immutability of the Existence, the Knowledge, the Counsels, the Moral Perfections, and the Felicity of God—Immutability not inconsistent with the act of Creation, the doctrine of the Incarnation, or the language of the Scriptures—Practical Reflections.

We have found that the universe is not eternal and independent, but that there is a Being distinct from it, who was anterior in existence as he is superior in dignity. He is absolutely eternal, without beginning of days or end of life, and is separated from matter by the spirituality of his essence. We have spoken of him in the singular number, because it is demonstrable that he is strictly One, existing alone without any associate. Unlike the gods of the heathen world, he is not attached to any place, but exists every where, unlimited in essence as he is in duration. To a Being, of whom immensity may be predicated, we are naturally led to ascribe all conceivable excellence. His infinite nature is the proper subject, if I may speak so, of every great and good, every venerable and amiable quality in the highest degree.

I proceed to speak of his immutability, by which we understand not only that his duration is permanent, but that his nature is fixed, immoveable, unaffected by external causes; in every respect the same from eternity

to eternity. That God is immutable, is a doctrine clearly taught in the Scriptures, and as we shall soon see, demonstrable by reason. "I am Jehovah, I change not."* "Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."† "He is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning;"‡ a Sun shining with perpetual splendour, and not like the ruler of the day, who is sometimes eclipsed and at other times clouded, now retires from us and then returns, according to the revolutions of the year.

Mutability is characteristic of all created beings. The heavenly bodies are too distant for us to make any observations upon their external structure; and we can only perceive their real or apparent changes of place. Upon the surface of the earth nothing is stationary. Its aspect is varied by the action of the elements, and by internal convulsions; even the rocks decay, and are sometimes violently removed from their places. Trees grow and fade; animals appear and perish; and than man himself who stands highest in the scale, what is more inconstant? His body passes from the feebleness of infancy to the vigour of manhood, and then sinks into the infirmity and decrepitude of old age. His mind undergoes a similar process; its powers unfold, flourish, and decline. With respect to superior beings, it is certain from what has befallen some of them, that they too were subject to mutation; that the stability which others enjoy is adventitious, being the gift of their Creator; and that, in one respect, even they are not permanent, but are necessarily advancing to higher degrees of knowledge and enjoyment.

The immutability of God may be proved from his necessary existence. That which exists by necessity of nature, by the same necessity exists as it is, and cannot be otherwise. Absolute necessity has no relation to time; as it does not result from, so it is not affected by circumstances. Whatever therefore exists by such a necessity, must be always the same; the same now as it formerly was; the same hereafter as it now is. With respect to a contingent being, we can conceive it to undergo a change without the destruction of its essence: there is no contradiction in supposing some of its qualities to be altered, in supposing it for instance to become less wise, less active, or less virtuous than it was. The reason is, that there is nothing in the nature of such a being, which necessarily infers its continuance in a particular state. But with respect to a necessary being, we cannot conceive it to be changed, without taking away the ground of its existence, if this expression may be permitted, or losing sight of necessity. To say that it is necessarily existent and yet may be changed, is with the same breath to say, that it is not necessarily existent. For necessity extends to the mode of its existence, as well as to its existence itself. If we could conceive a being to be changed in one respect, we could conceive it to be changed in another respect; and it being thus evident, that there was no necessary ground of its existence, we could conceive it to cease to exist. Whatever, therefore, exists by necessity of nature, must be immutable in essence and in all essential properties.

Some have stated this argument in a manner somewhat different, and as they apprehend, more intelligible. "The existence of God is independent of all will and power whatsoever; from which absolute and most perfect independence follows his perfect immutability and incorruptibility. For there is no will or power, either in himself or in any other being, which can alter his existence, seeing it is not subject to any will or power," it being certain that, as he was not produced by another, so he was not himself the cause of his existence. "No will or power, therefore, can possibly produce any alteration in his existence either by adding or taking away, or in any respect making it other than what it is. When there is no cause, there cannot be an effect: but of an alteration or change in God there is no possible cause, and therefore this effect, namely, a change in his existence, is impossible; and to say that this is possible would be as absurd as to assert that he might be the cause of himself, or might arise out of nothing. There is no cause of a change; and *nothing* is as incapable of producing one effect as another, can no more annihilate or alter existence than produce it."

The immutability of God may be proved from the perfect simplicity of his essence. There is no mixture or composition in it, and consequently there can be no addition, or subtraction, or transposition of parts, by which changes are effected in bodies. This, it may be said, is undeniable, since he is an immaterial being: but we add, that even in other immaterial beings, there is something which may be called composition, but which has no place in the Divine essence. Certain qualities are indeed inseparable from their essence, as invisibility, indivisibility, incorruptibleness, and thought, but others they may or may not possess, as wisdom and holiness. The history of creatures which are immaterial, as angels and human spirits, shews that such qualities may be lost, without destroying their nature, and consequently that they are superadded, and not essential. The perfections of God cannot be considered as in this sense distinct from his essence. By necessity of nature he is what he is; and it would be as express a contradiction to suppose him to be divested of any of his attributes, or to possess them in a less or a greater degree, as it would be to suppose a thing to be and not to be at the same time. The essences in fact of all things are immutable. They may be annihilated by the power which created them; but as long as they continue in existence, they must continue what they are: a change of any kind would be the destruction of their essence. Now, God is essentially perfect, and is therefore incapable of change, fixed and immoveable from eternity to eternity.

Once more, this doctrine may be illustrated in a plainer and more popular manner. Every change is to the worse, or to the better; it is the loss of some good already possessed, or the attainment of a greater degree of excellence. We have already taken notice of the deterioration of created beings. To say nothing of the decay and dissolution of vegetable and animal substances, intelligent creatures of the highest order have fallen from their primitive innocence and glory; man has lost the image of God, the noblest ornament of his nature, and sunk into the degradation of sin; the wise and virtuous often relapse into folly and vice; genius sometimes expires like a candle burnt down to the socket; and the old man experiences a second time the mental and corporeal debility of childhood. But no cause can be conceived for a similar change in that great Being, who is not subject to the action of any external power, and contains in himself no principle of corruption. Among the wild and impious imaginations, which are daily passing through the mind, no man in his senses ever supposed that the knowledge of the Deity might be diminished, his arm might be enfeebled, his benevolence might be exhausted, or his love of truth and justice might be exchanged for a disregard of moral distinctions. We revolt from the idea with horror. It is too impious even for the atheist himself; for if he believed in a God, he would exempt him from all the infirmities of limited and dependent beings.

Creatures often undergo a change to the better. The seed ripens into a plant, and the embryo becomes a

* Mal. iii. 6. † Ps. cii. 25—27. ‡ James i. 17.

perfect animal. The body of man advances from the feebleness of infancy to the full stature of manhood; and his opening mind admits the increasing light of knowledge, and gradually develops its powers. A similar progress takes place in the spiritual life. Existence which had a beginning is continued by a succession of moments; and endowments which were originally limited, may receive gradual accessions, and rise step by step to the summit of the scale. We have already remarked, that there is reason to believe that the state of happy beings in the world to come will be progressive: as we cannot conceive them ever to arrive at a point in eternity, beyond which there will be nothing more to be known and enjoyed. But, between finite beings and Him who is infinite, there is no analogy. Possessed, by the supposition, of all possible perfection, he cannot become wiser, holier, more powerful, and more benevolent than he is. In his nature, all greatness and all goodness are united. He is the standard of excellence to all orders of creatures, who are more or less perfect according to their degrees of resemblance to Him. To Him there is no standard. In the universe he sees nothing equal to himself, and his infinite understanding can conceive nothing more excellent.

This reasoning which is frequently employed to prove the Divine immutability, is of ancient date, and occurs in the second book of Plato's work De Republica. It is in the form of a dialogue, and this is the substance of what is said by the speakers. "If any change should take place in God, it is plain that it would be effected by himself. Whether then would he change himself into something better and fairer, or something worse and baser than himself? It is necessary, that if he is changed, it should be into something worse; for we will not say that God is in any respect deficient in beauty or virtue. This is right; and such being the case, can it be thought that any being, whether God or man, would voluntarily make himself worse? It is impossible; and it is therefore impossible that God should will to change himself; but as it seems, being the fairest and the best, he always remains simply in his own form." He expresses himself in this manner, because he refers to the tales of the poets, who represented the gods as appearing in a variety of shapes.

By this general reasoning we prove the immutability of God. It is from the condition of creatures, who are subject to perpetual fluctuation, that we acquire the notion of change; but it is equally absurd to transfer it to God, as to ascribe to him other human infirmities. The Divine nature is not affected by any of the causes which alter the state and qualities of dependent beings. Let us proceed to inquire in what respect God is immutable.

First, He is immutable in his existence. He never began to be, and he will never cease to be; and in this view his immutability coincides with his eternity, which has been already demonstrated. At every point of infinite duration it may be said to him, "Thou art." There was a time, for so we must speak, when there were no created beings, but then He was; there will be a time when, it may be, this visible creation shall be annihilated, but then He will be. To the immutable duration of the Divine nature, our Saviour alluded in these remarkable words, which the adversaries of his Deity have used so many dishonest arts to explain away, but which remain unaffected by their criticisms. "Before Abraham was, I am."* The sentence is at variance with the laws of grammar; the present time is represented as preceding the past. From this apparent confusion, there is no possibility of extricating the words, but by the sublime and mysterious doctrine of the immutable existence of the speaker in his superior nature. "I AM" is the name of God; and it imports, that in his existence the distinctions of past, present, and to come, have no place. Hence our Lord did not say, I *was* before Abraham, for in this manner any angel might have spoken of himself; but I AM, intimating that in reference to his duration, the two thousand years which had elapsed since the days of the patriarch were annihilated. The existence of creatures is successive, and may be compared to a stream in perpetual motion, of which one part is past, and another is to come. The present moment only is our own, and it is gone while we are speaking of it. What we call the present, is the swift passage of fugitive instants. But the existence of God, as we endeavoured lately to shew, is totally different. Far as the subject is above our comprehension, yet it seems to be an unavoidable conclusion, that in duration absolutely eternal there is no succession, and that a duration measured by days and years, must have had a beginning. The terms young and old are inapplicable to Him who always is, and serve merely to express the different stages in a series, advancing farther and farther from the point at which it commenced. The title, Ancient of days, is not intended to signify that he is old, but that he existed from eternity, before all the generations of men. All the distinctions of time are set aside by the declaration of the Apostle, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."* It is when the sacred writer is describing the transitory nature of creatures, their tendency to decay, and their final dissolution, that he takes occasion to attribute immutability to God, in a passage formerly quoted, intimating that time, which affects all other beings, has no influence upon him, and that his existence is independent of it. "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure. As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."†

Secondly, He is immutable in knowledge. We are so ignorant of superior beings, that we cannot speak positively and particularly concerning them; but while we conceive them to have been endowed with a large measure of knowledge from their origin, we are certain that it was not infinite, and that it therefore admitted of increase, and has since been progressive. Man comes into the world altogether destitute of knowledge. He has no innate ideas, but merely is endowed with the capacity of acquiring knowledge, which is excited by his senses, and by the other means employed for the improvement of his intellectual faculties. Thus creatures are always undergoing a change in their mental state, rising higher and higher in attainments. And this is not the only change experienced by men, who lose as well as gain knowledge, and are subject to frequent revolutions of sentiment, from right to wrong, and from wrong to right. They are misled by hasty and partial observation, imposed upon by sophistry, and reclaimed from error by more correct information, and more exact inquiry. The knowledge of God is infinite as his essence. He knows himself; he knows all things which now are, which have been, and which shall be. He knows all possible things, or all things which his power could create, and his wisdom could arrange. The whole system of creation is constantly before him, because he is intimately present with it; he can have no discoveries to make, who is already in every place where there exists any object of knowledge. "Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways."‡ When a man travels into a foreign country where the aspect of nature, the form of the buildings, and the manners of the inhabitants, differ much from those of his native land, we say that he acquires a stock of new ideas;

* John viii. 58.

* 2 Peter iii. 8. † Ps. cii. 26, 27. ‡ Ps. cxxxix. 3.

but nothing is new to Him who fills heaven and earth. The language of Scripture is figurative, when it represents him as looking down, or coming down to see what men are doing upon earth; and nothing is intended but to teach us that he has a perfect knowledge of their proceedings. It cannot be doubted that the Maker of the universe is thoroughly acquainted with his own work; that as he furnished its inhabitants with their faculties and principles of action, he knows beforehand what they can, and will do; and that since he upholds them by his power, and arranges their circumstances, he distinctly foresees every event in their history. As his knowledge is universal, so it is infallible. The objects of his contemplation are not appearances, but realities. Every thing presents itself to Him as it is in itself, and in all its connections and consequences. He perceives the essences of things on which their qualities are founded. He cannot be mistaken, because the whole case is before him; he cannot be disappointed, because no unexpected cause will disturb the order of events; analogy, conjecture, and calculation, must not be attributed to an understanding which sees the future as distinctly as the present. To some, indeed, it has seemed impossible to reconcile the foreknowledge of God with the free agency of man, and they have chosen rather to deny the Divine prescience, than to infringe human liberty. Hence they have not hesitated to represent Him as ignorant of the future volitions of men and of the events depending upon them, as looking forward with anxiety to their determinations, and as compelled to change his procedure when the result does not accord with the plan which he had previously formed; and those passages of Scripture which ascribe to him fear, desire, expectation, disappointment, and repentance, they have understood literally, as indicating the same emotions in his mind which are caused in ours by our ignorance of futurity. But such a mode of interpretation is unworthy of any person who makes a pretension to common sense, because it rests upon expressions manifestly figurative, to the neglect of the plainest and most explicit declarations in other places, of the foreknowledge of God. The predictions of Scripture afford complete demonstration, that future events are known to him as certainly as those which are present; and at the same time, that the persons by whom they are fulfilled, retain their free agency, and are responsible for their actions. I shall refer only to the prophecies concerning the sufferings and death of the Messiah. The event was fixed, and the agents were appointed; but they were conscious of perfect freedom, and obeyed the inclinations of their own hearts, while they were doing what God's "hand and counsel had determined before to be done." "Known to him were all his works from the beginning of the world."* The whole train of events, from the creation to the general judgment, was present to his mind from eternity. In the shifting scenes of human affairs, he sees only the evolution of his own plan. Experience is daily teaching us; but to his eye, all things were open and manifest from the commencement of time. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? with whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?"† He is immutable in knowledge; it is independent and underived, and always perfect.

In the third place, He is immutable in his counsels or decrees. This is a necessary inference from the immutability of his knowledge. Men change their designs, because by reflection or experience they find them to be impracticable, there being obstacles in the way which they had not taken into the calculation; or because they have discovered that they would be productive of evil instead of good, or at least would not realize the advantages which they expected from them; or because some new plan has been suggested, from which greater and more numerous benefits will result; and sometimes because they cannot long fix their attention upon a particular object, and are happy only when they are roving from one pursuit to another. But none of these causes can have any influence upon him whose knowledge is comprehensive and perfect. Among all possible ends having selected the best, and fixed upon the most proper means of accomplishing them, he cannot be induced to deviate from his choice. No new views can present themselves to his mind, nor is it possible that any change of circumstances should take place which might render the adoption of a different order of procedure expedient. The imperfection of our knowledge, the limited nature of our prospects, and the consequent mistakes into which we are betrayed, account for the fluctuations of our conduct.

The decrees of God have been the subject of controversy in every age. It will be acknowledged by every person who has attentively considered them, that they are mysterious, and are attended with difficulties, of some of which a satisfactory solution cannot be given. There is one difficulty which presses upon every system, namely, how to reconcile a fixed and prior purpose with the free agency and accountableness of man. There are disputes respecting the relation of the decrees to the foreknowledge of God; whether he foresees future things as certain because he has decreed them, or his foreknowledge is the foundation of his decrees. But in one thing all are agreed, who admit his omniscience and supreme dominion, that he has settled a plan in conformity to which the order of the world proceeds. In this plan no alteration is ever made. The notion of temporal and mutable decrees is founded on the supposition which is alike contrary to sound reason and to Scripture, that the future actions of men are not certainly foreknown. What an idea does it give us of Him, who, in the possession of infinite perfection, is independent upon the whole creation, to represent him as determining one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow; as passing from one intention to another according to the capricious movements of inferior beings, who are the sport of their own fancies, and are driven by every gust of passion.

God predetermined the number of which the human race should consist, the time when each individual should come into existence, the circumstances of his lot, the part which he should act upon the theatre of the world, and his final state throughout an eternal duration. "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will."* Amidst the diversity in the dispensations of providence, he is steadily carrying on his own designs. Kingdoms rise and fall; war lays the earth desolate; the bad passions of the human heart have full play, and make such inroads upon the order and happiness of society, that the world may seem to be dismissed from the care of the almighty Ruler. Yet we are sure that the Lord reigns, that he directs and controls the operations of his creatures, and makes the most depraved and perverse of them subservient to his purposes. Not one of them can deviate a single step from the path marked out to him; the mightiest and most self-willed of them cannot lift his hand or move his tongue, so as to interfere with the designs of the Almighty. There is the appearance of confusion only to us, who are but a part of the extensive and complicated system, and are unable to trace its connection with the past and the future. All is order to that eye which looks at once through all space, and all duration. As there is a perfect harmony beween his counsels and

* Acts iv. 28. and xv. 18. † Isa. xl. 13, 14.

* Ephes. i. 11.

his works, he can with no more justice be charged with mutability, on account of the varieties in his proceedings, than it could be imputed to a man of comprehensive views and commanding influence, who, in executing a favourite scheme, should at one time employ the services of a friend, and at another take advantage of the actions of an enemy, and who, by his superior wisdom, was able to convert occurrences hostile in their tendency, into means of ultimate success. Amidst this variety of contrivances, his mind is unchanged; and the knowledge of his purpose illustrates the consistency of his conduct.

Once more, He is immutable in his moral perfections. He is essentially just and holy; and the rectitude and purity of his nature are displayed in all his dispensations. The moral laws which he has given for the government of mankind, are never repealed or suspended. The same duties are in every age required from men in the same circumstances: it has never happened, and it never will happen, that sin shall obtain his favour, and righteousness shall cease to be the object of his approbation. The manner of transacting with men has been different, according to the difference of their circumstances. The religion of a state of innocence, could not be the same with that of a state of guilt; and the religion of sinners has varied in its external form, as we learn by tracing its history in the patriarchal age, under the law, and since the introduction of Christianity. No two things seem more unlike than the Gospel, with its few and simple institutions, and the Mosaic economy, with its numerous and splendid rites. But, when the systems are examined, we find that in all essential points they perfectly agree. Under both the same truths are taught, the same duties are enjoined, and the same end is aimed at,—the reconciliation of sinners to God, and the restoration of his image in their souls. In all ages, man has stood in the same general relation to God and to his fellow men; and love to his Maker and his neighbour has been inculcated as the principle of universal obedience.

The immutability of the moral perfections of God is evident from the Mediatorial scheme, which amidst its manifestations of love, and its wonderful contrivances for the diffusion of happiness among our lost and ruined race, discovers the strictest regard to truth, and justice, and purity, and sheds new lustre upon them. It has made no change in the law which had pronounced its curse upon us, in order to facilitate our escape from its power; it has prescribed the fulfilment of its demands as the indispensable condition of our salvation, and established it in all its rights. The immutability of God is the principle upon which this scheme rests. There would have been no occasion for the substitution and sufferings of the glorious Person who redeemed us, if it had been possible that God could have lowered the standard of duty to accommodate it to our weakness, or could have abstained from recompensing transgression according to its desert. It was not without reason that he gave this terrible example of avenging wrath to the universe. It was not simply to display his power, nor was it to gratify himself with the spectacle of agony and blood; it was to proclaim to all worlds the unbending rectitude of his nature, and his eternal abhorrence of sin.

This view of the immutability of God is necessary to the support of religion. The supposition of inconstancy would destroy our veneration for him; there would be no solid basis to sustain our hopes; we could place no confidence in his promises; there would be no fixed standard of morality; and we should be embarrassed at every step, not knowing how to secure his approbation, because the conduct which was acceptable to him at one time, might be offensive at another. But "his righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and his law is the truth."

It is unnecessary to extend the argument to his other perfections. While the immutability of God distinguishes him from all creatures, it will, perhaps, seem to us to be hardly consistent with the idea of consummate felicity. Variety appears to us to be essential to happiness; we wish for new scenes, new pleasures, and new occupations; and to have always the same objects before us, to be always drawing from the same sources of enjoyment, to be fixed in the calm and repose of contemplation, or from day to day to go over the same uniform round of actions, is accounted the description of a dull and melancholy life. The range of the Divine understanding, indeed, is not limited like ours; it sees all things in earth and heaven; it sees them at a glance; they are more familiar to it than the few objects in our vicinity are to us; and nothing occurs which it did not always know. But we err, when we transfer to God any thing in ourselves which arises from our imperfection. We are right in ascribing knowledge to him, but are wrong if we conceive it like ours to be partial. We are right in ascribing power to him, but are wrong if we suppose that it is ever accompanied with labour and effort. It would be an error equally gross to suppose him to be influenced by the love of variety, which is the result of the limited capacity of our nature. We can admit at any given time, only a part of what may be known and enjoyed; but our Maker has formed us capable of interminable progress; and hence, we are urged forward by a powerful impulse from the point which we have gained to another which rises to view, and holds out the hope of greater advantage. What we already possess is soon exhausted, and we seek a new supply; or it creates sensations so delightful, that we wish them to be multiplied and heightened. The Supreme Being finds eternal rest and satisfaction in himself. The well-springs of his happiness are in his own nature: even his infinite understanding can conceive nothing greater and more excellent; and of every thing external he is so independent as not to be affected by its existence or annihilation. In the possession of his own resources, he is consummately and permanently blessed; and hence the Scripture calls him the happy God, the happy* and only Potentate, the Being who has in himself an inexhaustible store of felicity, and therefore needs no change as creatures do, who, possessing only a diminutive portion of good, feel the craving of desire, and hasten on from stage to stage in quest of a resting place.

It may be objected to the doctrine of the divine immutability, that there are certain facts in the history of the divine dispensations, which seem to be at variance with it. We shall therefore briefly consider them, and endeavour to shew that the inconsistency is only apparent.

First, It may be alleged, that a change must have taken place in the Divine nature, when this earth and the heavens were created, because then God, who, if we may speak so, had rested from infinite ages, became active and exerted his power and all the other perfections which are displayed in his works. Let us beware of thinking that this rest which we ascribe to God prior to creation, was like the rest of body, which is opposed to motion; or like the rest of the soul, when its powers are suspended in a swoon or during profound sleep. A living and intelligent Being must have been always active, as our minds are when we are awake. God must have been always active in contemplating and loving himself; and let us remember, that although alone, he was not solitary, as we know from the mysterious doctrine of a plurality of persons in his essence. The only difference which creation could make, was, that now he became active *ad extra*.† But let

* Μακαριος, *beatus*, happy. 1 Tim. vi. 15.

† Outwardly, or exteriorly.

us not, in this instance, degrade him by a comparison with his creatures. We experience a sensible change when we pass from inaction to activity; we put our bodies in motion and exert our muscular strength; but it is not so with the Omnipotent, whose eternal operations imply no effort and are effected by a simple volition. The first chapter of Genesis represents all things as having been made by his word. He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, and the earth brought forth the living creature after his kind." Omnipotence does not toil and suffer fatigue. The magnificent fabric of the universe was produced out of nothing by God, more easily than we can move our arm. He underwent no change, when he proceeded in this manner to execute his plan.

In the second place, It may be thought, that although the act of creation might be consistent with the immutability of the Divine nature, yet a change must have undoubtedly taken place in it, at the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity, when God became man, or, in the words of the Evangelist, "the Word was made flesh." This inference would be legitimate, if it were true that the two natures of our Saviour were mixed or blended together; or that the Divine nature supplied the place of a human soul, and consequently became subject to human passions; or that it acquired by this union any new property, or suffered a limitation of its original powers; if, to use the scoffing language of blasphemers, the Deity had been imprisoned in the body of an infant, had been grieved and tormented, and had died upon the cross. But these are all erroneous views of the subject, heresies which have long since been refuted, wilful misrepresentations which we repel with the scorn which they most justly deserve. The incarnation was the union of two natures in one person or such a union, that the assumed nature as truly belongs to our Saviour as the original one: but they remain as distinct as if they were not united. The divine was not humanized, nor the human deified; there was no communication of properties from the one to the other; both continued in their integrity, and in the possession of their peculiar qualities. This most intimate of all the relations in which the Divine nature stands to created beings affected it no more than the relation subsisting between that nature and the other individuals of the human race.

In the third place, it may be asked, How shall we reconcile with this doctrine those passages of Scripture which represent God as having actually changed? Do we not read that it "repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth?" and again, that "it repented him that he had set up Saul to be king over Israel?* The solution of this difficulty is very simple, and is generally known. In speaking of himself, God accommodates his language to our conceptions, that we may the more easily apprehend his character and perfections, and that the truth signified to us by metaphors and similitudes may make a deeper impression. He describes himself as clothed with bodily members, but no person supposes that he has eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet. He describes himself as awaking, but surely no man will think that ever he falls asleep. Common sense directs us to understand all such passages as figurative. Does it not also require that we should put the same construction upon other passages which attribute human feelings and passions to God? We might suspect the mind of that man to be deranged, who should imagine that he fears, expects, is disappointed, grieves and rejoices; and why then should the idea be admitted, that he literally repents? When a person adopts a new line of conduct, we conclude that he has changed his mind. It is on this ground that God is said to repent; the cause is put for the effect, by a well-known figure of speech; and the change of his mind signifies merely a change of dispensation. When he destroyed the inhabitants of the earth by a flood, and transferred the right to reign from Saul to another person, he acted as if he had repented, in the one case, that he had created a race which had become exceedingly corrupt, and in the other, that he had bestowed the crown upon a man who showed himself unworthy of it. But in both cases, the repentance was only apparent; for the events upon which his change of conduct was founded, were foreseen from the beginning. God knew that the human race would apostatize from him, and that Saul would not hearken to his voice.

In the fourth place, It may be suspected that God really changes, when he hates a person whom he once loved, or loves a person whom he once hated. Of the former change, we have an example in the apostate angels and in Adam, who lost the favour and incurred the displeasure of their Creator; and of the latter, in those who, through the faith of the Gospel, pass from a state of condemnation into a state of acceptance. In these cases, a change must be acknowledged; but it remains to be ascertained in whom it has taken place. Has God changed? No more than the sun changes when the different parts of the earth successively come into his light, and retire into darkness. That glorious luminary continues to shine with equal splendour, but terrestrial objects are in perpetual motion. He stands still, and they pass away. To ascribe motion to him is a vulgar error, which philosophy corrects. God does not love at one time, and at another hate an individual continuing in all respects the same; for were this the case, we should be compelled to say that he is mutable. Those who are always holy, are always the objects of his love; and those who are always impure, are always the objects of his hatred. The change is in his creatures, who having lost their righteousness, have fallen under his displeasure; or having recovered it by his grace, have regained his approbation. It would be an unequivocal proof of mutability, if he entertained the same regard to a creature after it had lost its innocence as before; because the object of his regard, although physically the same, would be morally different, and could not continue to attract his love, without a change in him corresponding to the change which it had undergone. The withdrawment of his favour from a sinner, and the restoration of it to the believing penitent, supply irrefragable evidence that he is governed by an unbending principle of rectitude, and that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

The immutability of God is fraught with consolation. It is a rock on which we can fix our feet, while the mighty torrent is sweeping away every thing around us. Awful indeed is the idea of a Being dwelling from age to age amidst the plenitude of perfection and felicity, to whom time is as a moment, and the universe as a span! What is man, that he should regard him! What is man, who yesterday opened his eyes to the light, and to-morrow shall close them in the grave? Yet he condescends to be our friend and protector, and consoles us by the assurance, that although we are as the flower of the field, which is withered by the passing blast, yet his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, and his faithfulness to children's children. To christians this consolation belongs. The permanence of his character secures to them the performance of his promises, a welcome reception when they come to him with their requests, succour in the season of need, and happiness stretching beyond the boundaries of time, uninterrupted by death itself, and prolonged through an infinite duration. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant

* Gen. vi. 6. 1 Sam. xv. 11.

of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee."*

The Divine immutability, like the cloud which interposed between the Israelites and the Egyptian army, has a dark as well as a light side. It insures the execution of his threatenings, as well as the performance of his promises; and destroys the hope which the guilty fondly cherish, that he will be all lenity to his frail and erring creatures, and that they will be much more lightly dealt with than the declarations of his own word would lead us to expect. We oppose to these deceitful and presumptuous speculations the solemn truth, that God is unchangeable in veracity and purity, in faithfulness and justice. There is another delusion which this doctrine is fitted to dispel. The thought of hell, as a prison from which there is no release, is alarming; and men, unable to work themselves into a complete disbelief of its existence, have sought to relieve their minds by converting it into a purgatory, or a place of temporary punishment. The Judge will relent, and let the criminals go free. Future sufferings will prove corrective, and prepare for a universal restoration. But here again his immutability meets us. It is vain to expect from him what is inconsistent with his nature. What he is at present he will always be. As fire will always burn, so his holiness will always abhor, and his justice will always pursue with vengeance, the workers of iniquity. There can be no just hope of escape without a change in themselves, and it must take place before the day of doom. This life is the season of trial, the world to come is the place of recompense, and there the allotment is final. The decree by which it is fixed, is founded on the eternal principles of justice, and is as immutable as God himself.

LECTURE XXI.

ON GOD.

Division of the Divine Attributes into communicable and incommunicable—First communicable Attribute, Knowledge: proof of this Attribute—Extent of the Divine Knowledge—Scholastic distinctions respecting it—Illustration of its Perfection—Practical Reflections.

The attributes of God are the properties or excellencies by which his nature is distinguished; and in the possession of them, he is absolutely and infinitely perfect. There are two ways of demonstrating them: *a priori* and *a posteriori*. They are demonstrated *a priori* when having ascertained that there is a necessarily existing Being, we prove that such a Being must be eternal, immense, immutable, intelligent, and active. They are demonstrated *a posteriori* when we prove them from the evidence afforded by his works. In the preceding lectures both kinds of reasoning have been employed.

The divine perfections are usually divided into two classes, the incommunicable, and the communicable. The incommunicable are those of which there is no vestige or resemblance in creatures, as self-existence, absolute eternity, immensity and immutability. Of these a nature created, limited, dependent, and consequently subject to change, is incapable. The communicable perfections are those to which there is something corresponding in creatures, as knowledge, wisdom, goodness and justice. As they do not in thire nature imply the idea of infinity, although in the Creator they are infinite, they may belong in a low degree to limited beings. I say in a low degree, as faint shadows of the great Original; and on account of their comparative insignificance, the Scripture sometimes speaks as if creatures were as destitute of these, as of the perfections which are acknowledged to be incommunicable, and they were to be found in the Creator alone. He is called "the only wise God;"* and our Lord said to the young man who addressed him by the compellation of Good Master, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God."† When we are contemplating his underived and unbounded perfection, the excellencies of man and angels disappear, like the lesser lights in the meridian blaze of the sun.

In speaking of the attributes of God, we must remember that his nature is perfectly simple. This truth has been demonstrated from his unity, which excludes the idea of composition; from his self-existence, which imports that nothing preceded him as something does in the case of all compounds; from his immutability, which could not be predicated of his nature if it were made up of parts; and from other topics, which it is unnecessary to mention. If it has already appeared that he is an immaterial Being, it is a necessary consequence that he is not compounded, in the grosser acceptation of the term, because a spirit has no parts, and is indivisible and incorruptible. But the simplicity which theologians ascribe to God is a metaphysical conception, and means that his essence and attributes are not distinct, or that his attributes must not be conceived as superadded to his essence, and hypothetically separable from it; but that his essence and attributes are one. And as they are not distinct from his essence, so they are not distinct from each other; but there is one indivisible nature, having different manifestations and relations to external things, which, according to our inadequate conceptions, appear to us to be different perfections. In themselves they are one, although to us they seem to be many.

This manner of representing the subject has been objected to, and attempts have been made to turn it into ridicule. "Here," it has been said, "are attributes, which are no attributes; which are totally distinct, and perfectly the same; which are justly ascribed to God, being ascribed to him in Scripture, but do not belong to him; which are something, and nothing; which are figments of human imagination; mere chimeras, which are God himself; which are the actors of all things, and which, to sum up all, are themselves a simple act." There is no doubt that a person, who was disposed to amuse himself on a subject so solemn, might find some ground in the language employed. The only sense in which it is intelligible is, as stated in a former lecture, that we ought not to conceive his attributes to be separable from his essence; that he is what he is, by necessity of nature; that when we speak of his wisdom, it is God himself who is wise; of his power, it is God himself who is mighty; of his goodness, it is God himself who is good. We have said that some of the qualities of creatures are not essential to them; but God never is or can be without his perfections. All this is plain to any understanding; but if there is any other sense in which his perfections are said to be himself, I confess that it surpasses my comprehension; and equally incomprehensible is the proposition, that his perfections are one in themselves, if any thing more be meant than that the Divine essence is at once intelligent, holy, just, and benevolent. I know not well what is meant by making them distinct from his essence; nor am I certain that any man ever conceived them to be distinct, however unguardedly he may have expressed himself. A physical distinction is impossible, and a metaphysical one is only a mode of thinking, which is unavoidable in considering any being simply as a being, and then as endowed with certain characteristic properties or quali-

* Isaiah liv. 10.

* 1 Tim. i. 17. † Matth. xix. 17.

ties. It is enough to believe that God is by nature possessed of all possible perfections.

Having made these observations, which are applicable to the Divine perfections in general, I proceed to the consideration of those which are called communicable, because there is some resemblance of them among creatures. Let us begin with the attribute of knowledge.

Every person who believes that there is a God, readily admits that he is possessed of intelligence, without which he would be inferior to many of his own creatures. Intelligence is so manifestly essential to the First Cause, that none have doubted of it, whatever erroneous conceptions they have entertained of the Deity in the want of supernatural instruction. Some have conceived their gods to be material beings, have clothed them with human infirmities, and represented them as subject to human passions; but all have believed that they were witnesses of the actions of men, and acquainted with the events which take place upon the earth. The ancient Egyptians, who expressed their conceptions by hieroglyphics, made an eye the symbol of the Deity, to intimate that all things are open to his inspection. The prayers, and other religious services of the heathens, proceeded on the supposition that they were heard and observed by the objects of their worship; and their belief in prophets who foretold future events, and in oracles to which they resorted for counsel in matters of difficulty, implied an opinion, that from the gods nothing was concealed, and that events were subject to their control.

In proof that knowledge is one of the perfections of God, the following arguments may be adduced.

In the first place, as it necessarily enters into the idea of a perfect Being, so it is essentially connected with other attributes, which all acknowledge to belong to him, and which will be afterwards considered. We believe him to be omnipotent, holy, just, and good, and these perfections imply that he is an intelligent Being. Power without knowledge would be blind force, which would remain inactive from want of any motive to exert it, or would be exerted by mere chance, to build up or to demolish, to create or to annihilate. Such an effect as the present system of things could not have been produced by it, for it exhibits the clearest proofs of design, and must therefore be regarded as the result of a plan previously formed. Without intelligence, he could not be holy and just; for moral perfections imply a perception of the essential differences of things, the power of distinguishing good and evil, right and wrong, an acquaintance with the nature and relations of other intelligent beings, their faculties, their opportunities, their temptations, their duties, and their crimes. He could not be good, if by a blind necessity or a fortuitous act he dispensed life and its enjoyments, any more than the sun is good, because it pours light and heat upon the earth. We do not call a man good, who scatters his favours at random from instinct rather than from reason; for goodness implies a benevolent design, and a benevolent design supposes the objects of its exertions to be known, and their welfare to be intended. What excellence could we perceive in a Being, eternal, omnipresent, and immutable, if he were ignorant of every thing without himself, and even of his own existence and attributes, as he would be if knowledge were not one of the number? The meanest creature, who was conscious of his own thoughts and capable of observation and reasoning, would be superior to him; and in fact, we could hardly distinguish such a Being from the material universe. We could not believe him to be a spiritual Being, because although we will not be so absurd as to confound a substance with its property, and say that thought is the essence of spirit, yet we must hold, that to a spirit it is essential to think.

In the second place, the intelligence of the Supreme Being may be inferred from its existence among creatures, since it is an unquestionable principle, that as every effect has a cause, so there can be no more in the effect than there is in the cause. It cannot communicate what it does not itself possess. We have a sure proof that there is intelligence among creatures, from consciousness and observation. We find intelligence in ourselves, and we see unequivocal evidence of it in others; our bodily senses and our mental faculties are the gifts of our Maker; if we acknowledge that we were created by his power, we cannot doubt from what source those parts of our constitution are derived. We perceive the external world; we discover the properties and relations of objects around us; we become acquainted with a variety of truths in science, morals, and religion, which do not fall under the cognizance of our senses. Passing the boundaries of our terrestrial habitation, we extend our researches to other regions, and can tell the laws by which the planets are guided in their course, and the most distant star which twinkles in the abysses of space is preserved. Limited as our knowledge is, and insignificant when compared with the omniscience of God, or even the attainments of superior beings, it extends so far as to demonstrate the strength and grandeur of our faculties. It may be presumed that the minds of superior beings are endowed with more ample powers. The discoveries which are the boast of human reason, may seem to angels as insignificant as the thoughts of a child appear to a philosopher; what is difficult to us may be easy to them, and what is mysterious may be plain. It is an obvious inference from the intelligence of creatures, that there is intelligence in the Creator, and that he possesses it in the most perfect degree. Whence could our knowledge have proceeded but from the Father of lights? We cannot resist the force of these questions of the Psalmist, "They say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?"*

In the third place we prove the knowledge of God from his omnipresence, which has been already demonstrated. When speaking of that perfection, we shewed, that unless he were present in all places, he could not know all things; and it may seem like reasoning in a circle now to prove, that he does know all things, because he is present with them. But the proper conclusion from this mode of proceeding is, that the two perfections are necessarily connected, so that the one cannot be conceived without the other. From his presence with creation, indeed, it does not necessarily follow that he knows it, unless there be some other evidence that he is an intelligent Being; but it corroborates that other evidence by shewing that there is no obstacle to his knowledge of all things which exist. The supposition of a local Deity would lead us, not directly to deny his intelligence, but to question whether his knowledge was infinite. We might think, that like other limited beings, he has his own sphere of perception, beyond which every thing was unknown to him. And if God were in heaven and not also upon earth, we could not believe that he was acquainted with all persons and events so remote from the place of his residence. We should be tempted to say with those ungodly men whom Eliphaz reproves, "How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not; and he walketh in the circuit of heaven."† Some things would be too distant or minute to be seen, and others so carefully concealed as to be observed only by

* Ps. xciv. 7—10. † Job xxii. 13, 14.

persons on the spot. But such unworthy notions are inapplicable to an infinite Being. Nothing is hidden from him. As there is not a point of space from which he is excluded, he knows the meanest insect as well as the lofty archangel; what is done in a corner as well as the most public transaction. He is in the closet and in the market place; and it is a saying among Mahometans, that when two persons meet together, there is likewise a third. "Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."*

Having proved that God is an intelligent Being, I proceed to inquire into the objects and extent of his knowledge. We shall find that it is unlimited, comprehending every thing which can be known. "His understanding is infinite."†

In the first place, God knows himself. "What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."‡ He knows what his own essence is, of which we can only say that it is spiritual, without being able to affix any positive idea to the term; he knows his own perfections, with some of which we have a partial acquaintance, while there may be many others, of which we have received no intimation; he knows the harmony of his attributes, which our weak minds are sometimes at a loss to reconcile; he knows his own counsels and plans, which are too extensive and complicated to be comprehended by any created intellect; he knows, in a word, all the mysteries of his nature at which reason stands amazed and confounded. While there can be no hesitation in ascribing this knowledge to God, we may take occasion to remark, in order to show how much superior is his understanding to ours, that we have no reason to think that any creature is possessed of similar knowledge. With respect to man, we are certain, that after all his wonderful discoveries, he labours under much ignorance of himself. He has indeed, minutely examined the structure of his body, and instituted profound inquiries into the powers of his mind; but in the most advanced state of science, he cannot tell what is the essence of either. What matter is, and what spirit is, are questions to which the philosopher, and the peasant are alike unable to return an answer. The properties are familiar, but the substance, or substratum, eludes the keen search of the eye, or the thought. Let it be further remarked, that it is properly from the knowledge of himself, that God's understanding appears to be infinite. We cannot, even in imagination, reach the limits of creation; but we are sure, that it has boundaries, and is not immense like its Maker: we cannot enumerate and classify all its constituent parts; but our reason tells us, that they may be numbered. Yet wonderful as the perfect knowledge of the universe would be, something still greater may be conceived. The creation of new worlds would open a new field for more extensive discoveries. The Divine nature is infinite, and is the only adequate object of an infinite understanding. Nothing, if I may speak so, can fill it; nothing corresponds to its capacity but infinite excellence. In its view, the universe is as a point and as nothing; but in reflecting upon itself, it finds eternal satisfaction and repose. How shallow are the apprehensions of mortals, and of creatures much higher than they! To us it is permitted only to behold the skirts of his glory, the few rays from his overpowering splendour which have pierced through the surrounding clouds. "How little a portion have we heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"‖ It will be the privilege and the joy of the blessed, dwelling in his immediate presence, to make continual progress in this study; but the delightful labour will never come to a close.

In the second place, God knows all beings besides himself, all things which have been, now are, or shall hereafter be. Thus we distinguish them according to their succession; but they are all before his comprehensive mind.

God knows all things which are past. Although they have gone by, and no memorial of them may remain, they are still present to him, as if they continued to exist, and not one of them is forgotten. By the faculty of memory, which, although familiar to us all, we cannot explain, we retain the knowledge of things which once were, but have ceased to be. The sunbeam leaves no trace of its path, nor the cloud of its place in the sky; but sensations and thoughts make an impression upon the mind, which lasts for years, and sometimes for life; and to this part of our constitution we are indebted for our mental improvement. We could make no advance, if our ideas were instantly obliterated. Since creatures possess the power of knowing the past, we must allow that there is a similar power in the Divine mind, but exempt from the weakness, and failures, and confusion to which our memories are subject. When we think of the generations which have passed away from the creation of the world; the millions who have been born and have died, with the numerous incidents in their lives, the plans which they contrived, the actions which they performed, the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears which chequered their existence, it seems to us that the recollection of so many particulars is impossible. But this notion will be corrected, as soon as we reflect upon the difference between a finite and infinite understanding. We are utterly overwhelmed when we think of it; we can form no positive idea of its capacity, and must rest in the negative conclusion that it has no limits. The relation to time of a being absolutely eternal, surpasses our comprehension. If he exists without succession, it would seem that the whole events of time are always present to him; and yet, as time is a succession of moments, of which some are past, and others are future, this appears to be impossible. Still we hesitate to ascribe memory to him, because it is a faculty of mutable beings, who have been carried away in their course to a distance from objects and events which were once present. As there is no distinction of past, present, and to come, in his duration, so there may be no distinction of the same kind in his knowledge. He knows all things by a glance. But in these speculations, it may perhaps be justly said, that we darken counsel by words without knowledge. This knowledge of past things God claims in proof of his superiority to the wisest of men and to the gods of the Gentiles. "Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say, It is truth." "Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen; let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come."* Upon the past as well as the future, there rests a cloud which the eyes of mortals cannot penetrate; and the only difference is, that while futurity without the aid of prophecy is all darkness, from the past there issue a few rays of light, in the accounts of former transactions which have been preserved, but which are often mixed with fable and falsehood, and leave us in utter ignorance of millions of facts which are irrecoverably lost. Without the

* Ps. cxxxix. 12. † Ps. cxlvii. 5. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 11.
‖ Job xxvi. 14. xi. 7.

* Is. xliii. 9. xli. 22.

knowledge of the past, God could not execute the august and awful office of the Judge of the human race. At the close of time, Adam and all his descendants will appear before him, to receive their final award, and the justice of the sentence will depend upon his accurate acquaintance with their character and actions. As he was the witness of their conduct during its course, so he will recall the minutest parts of it after an interval of thousands of years: and it is to assure us that no mistake will be committed, that the Scripture, in allusion to the proceedings of men, represents books as produced and opened, that the dead may be judged out of those things which are written in them.

God knows all present things, all things that now are. In this respect his knowledge resembles our own, but is infinitely superior in degree. He tells the number of the stars, and calls them by their names; he sees in one view the various orders of creatures which people the universe; he is acquainted with every individual of mankind, obscure as he may be and unnoticed by his neighbours; he observes the minutest and most insignificant animals, and counts the piles of grass. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and yet not one of them is forgotten before God.* Nothing can be more unimportant than a hair of our head, and yet our Saviour assures us, that our hairs are all numbered, and that one of them cannot fall to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father. The humblest person upon earth has no cause to fear, that amidst the multiplicity of objects which engage the Divine attention, he shall be overlooked; nor may he whose interest it would be to remain unnoticed, hope that he shall be concealed in the dark recess from the eye of Omniscience. He knows the actions of men; "for the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."† It is too often their sole object to maintain external decorum, in order to secure the good opinion of others; while in their absence, they throw off restraint, and display their real character. But there is a witness with them in the most secret place; there is an eye observing them, which they should dread more than the severest human judge. It is about the actions of men, that the knowledge of God as the moral Governor of the world is exercised; for in this character, he is the guardian of his laws, and observes whether they are obeyed or transgressed. And we remark, that he alone is the competent Judge of our actions, because he alone is acquainted with our circumstances and motives, and can distinguish between the form and the substance, the specious pretence and the upright intention. There are many considerations to be taken into account in a moral estimate of conduct, which he only can combine, to whom the proceedings of the mind are as manifest as external actions are to us. And hence we are led to remark, that God knows the hearts of men, and claims this knowledge as a prerogative in which no mortal shares with him. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."‡ Although we easily believe such knowledge to be the attribute of a Being who is as intimately present with our spirits as with our bodies, yet we can form no adequate conception of it, because it is so different from our own knowledge of each other's hearts, which is founded upon outward signs, often of doubtful interpretation, upon analogy or a presumed resemblance between them and ourselves, and in some cases merely upon conjecture; whereas the knowledge of God is immediate and intuitive. How awful the reflection, that he is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, that its inmost recesses are naked and opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do! Thoughts which are only half-formed, which are suppressed as soon as they arise, which fly across the mind and are forgotten, do not escape his observation. He traces the windings and labyrinths of the soul, and discovers latent principles and motives, of which we are ourselves hardly conscious. "His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves."*

God knows things to come. In this respect there is no resemblance of his knowledge in man, nor we presume in any creature. We perceive what is present, and remember what is past; but the future can be approached only by imagination, unless we deem it an exception, that we are necessarily led to believe that the laws of nature will always be as they have hitherto been, and that succeeding generations will be like the present in form, and in general habits and pursuits. But these vague notions leave us in perfect ignorance of the actual state of things which will afterwards take place. We know not a single individual who will be born, or a single event which will befall him. Something indeed is revealed to us concerning the future history of the world; but the light of prophecy has emanated from him, who says, "Behold the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."† This subject came under review, when we were speaking of the immutability of his knowledge. A proof, that he sees the future as well as the present, is furnished by the predictions of Scripture. God announced Cyrus by name long before his parents were born, and foretold his war against Babylon, and the means by which he should obtain possession of the city. He foretold the rise and fall of the four ancient monarchies, and portrayed before hand the characters and achievements of Alexander the Great and his successors, with such particularity and truth, that Porphyry, the learned adversary of Christianity in the third century, affirmed that the prophecies must have been written after the events. He foretold the birth of Jesus Christ, the place of his nativity, and the family from which he should spring, with the principal events of his life, and his death, although it was effected not by an immediate interposition of providence, but by the unexpected combination of Jews and Gentiles. It is unnecessary to multiply instances. We formerly adverted to the difficulty which has perplexed the thoughts, and exercised the ingenuity, of the studious in every age, with regard to the means of reconciling the foreknowledge of God with the free agency of man. What is certainly foreseen, will certainly happen; but the infallibility of the event seems to preclude liberty of action, which consists in the power of acting or not acting, and of acting in this way or in that, as at the moment the mind of the person shall determine. The discussion of this point would lead us into a digression from the present subject. It has been often remarked, and justly, that the simple foreknowledge of actions has no influence upon their existence; of which we may satisfy ourselves by reflecting, that when we have at any time ground for confident expectation that a neighbour will take a particular course, our foresight is not the cause of his conduct, which would have been the same if it had not been foreseen: but this observation only removes the difficulty a step farther back. As there can be no certain foreknowledge of things in themselves uncertain, it still remains to inquire, what is the ground of certainty in human actions which renders them the object of infallible foreknowledge? If it be said to be the Divine decree, the difficulty unquestionably is not

* Luke xii. 6. † Prov. xv. 3. ‡ Jer. xvii. 9, 10.

* Job xxxiv. 21, 22. † Is. xlii. 9.

diminished. Amidst all the perplexity in which we are involved, one thing is beyond dispute, namely, that God does foreknow future events, and prophecy is a proof of it. The truth of both these principles is incontrovertible; that known to God are all his works from the beginning of the world, and that man is accountable. He is free, while he is acting the part which his Maker has assigned to him; and may be justly punished for doing what constitutes a necessary link in the chain of events. The Jews fulfilled the Divine purpose in crucifying our Saviour, and yet brought wrath upon themselves to the uttermost. It ought not to weaken our belief, that we cannot reconcile liberty and foreknowledge. Such is the condition of man and of all finite beings, that they must assent to many things, for which they cannot account. We need not wonder, that when our thoughts are directed to God, we are on all sides encompassed with mysteries.

God knows all possible things. No person can suppose, that those alone are possible, which have been, now are, or shall hereafter be; that Divine wisdom is exhausted by the plans which it has already concerted, and Divine power by the effects which it has already produced, or has determined to produce. God could have called into existence many other worlds, and many other orders of creatures. He could have arranged systems totally different from any of those which have been established, governed them by different laws, and peopled them with inhabitants of different natures and faculties. He could have made our own world the scene of a different train of events, by replenishing it with a race of holy beings, who should have never been induced by temptation to swerve from their duty, and among whom pain, and sorrow, and mortality, would have been unknown. His infinite understanding knows not only what he has done, and has purposed to do, but all that his wisdom could have devised, and all that his power could have accomplished. If any man should be so curious as to ask, why he chose the present system in preference to so many possible systems? he should be reminded, that the question is presumptuous, and that we can return no answer to it, because God has not informed us of the reasons; but that if he shall ever be pleased to disclose his counsels to us, they will undoubtedly be found worthy of eternal admiration and praise.

The knowledge of God may be distinguished into two kinds, which have been called by Scholastic Divines *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*, and *scientia visionis*.* *Scientia visionis* has for its object all things past, present, and to come; it is said to be founded on will, because the measure of it is the will of God, as expressed in his eternal purpose. He foresees as future those things alone which he has determined to bring to pass. They were only possible, till he decreed their futurition. It is called also *scientia libera*, free knowledge, because it depends upon his will, which is the only reason of all the events of time. As nothing could take place independently of him, so he was under no necessity to act at all, or to act in any particular manner; but all his operations, *ad extra*, are the result of free choice. *Scientia simplicis intelligentiæ* has for its object possible things, things which might have been done, but never will be done. The measure of it is omnipotence; that is, while the former knowledge is limited by his decree, this is extensive as his power. He knows all that he could do; and because this knowledge is not founded on his will but on his power, it has been called *scientia necessaria*.† His infinite understanding necessarily knows every thing which his infinite power can effect. A third kind of knowledge has been ascribed to God, and called *scientia media*,‡ as being something between the two kinds already mentioned. It is the knowledge of what will happen in certain given circumstances, the knowledge of what creatures will do, if endowed with certain qualities and placed in certain situations. But there is no occasion for this distinction, as all the objects of this new kind of knowledge are comprehended under the head of *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*. If God by his infinite understanding, knows all possible causes and all their possible effects, he knows what would be the result in any supposable case. He knew that the men of Keilah would deliver up David to Saul, because he knew the state of their hearts, and the influence which the authority and solicitations of that monarch would have upon their conduct. It is objected farther against the *media scientia*, that it is unworthy of God, as it makes him dependent upon creatures for a part of his knowledge; for the distinction has been invented with a design to prove, that his knowledge of the future actions of men is not founded on his own purpose to permit them, or to bring them to pass, but in a prospective view of the manner in which they will conduct themselves. It was introduced in opposition to the doctrine of free and sovereign grace, and it proposes to account for his purpose to give grace to one and not to another, by his foresight of the use which they would make of means and opportunities.

Concerning the knowledge of God, we assert, in opposition to this opinion, that it is independent. It is not obtained through the medium of his creatures, but, so far as it respects future things, is founded on his own will. No effect can be viewed as future, or in human language, can be the object of certain expectation, but when considered in relation to its efficient cause; and the cause of all things that ever shall exist is the purpose of God, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." As the knowledge of God does not depend upon the actual existence of objects,—for this would limit it to the present and the past,—so it does not depend upon any conditions attached to their existence. He does not know that such things will happen, if such other things shall go before; but the whole series of events was planned by his infinite understanding, the ends as well as the means; and he foresees the ends, not through the medium of the means, but through the medium of his own decree, in which, they have a certain future existence. They will not take place without the means; but the proper cause of them is not the means, but his almighty will.

It follows in the second place, that the knowledge of God is eternal. If it be independent upon creatures, and founded in his own purpose, then it is as ancient as his purpose. Were it impossible to foresee the free actions of men, much of his knowledge would be acquired in time. It would be daily receiving accessions like our own, to which something is added every day by our observation of the conduct of those with whom we are surrounded. It has been said, "that as it implies not any reflection on the Divine power, to say that it cannot perform impossibilities, so neither does it imply any reflection on his knowledge, to say that he cannot foresee as certain what is really not certain, but only contingent." This is true; but it remains to be proved that the actions of men are contingent in such a sense as to be uncertain. Reason will ascribe all possible knowledge to God; and that it is possible certainly to foresee the free actions of men, cannot be a matter of doubt to a believer in Divine revelation, which abounds in predictions of such actions. The knowledge of God is eternal. The doctrine of temporal decrees, of decrees made in time, as men shew themselves to be worthy or unworthy, is chargeable with the impiety of setting limits to the Divine understanding, and making the Most High fickle and mutable as man, who is of one mind to-day, and of another to-morrow.

* The knowledge of simple intelligence, *and* the knowledge of sight.
† Necessary knowledge.
‡ Middle, or mediate knowledge.

In the next place, The knowledge of God is simultaneous, or as it has been differently expressed, not discursive but intuitive. Some parts of human knowledge are intuitive; that is, the things are perceived at once, and no process of reasoning is necessary to discover them. There are certain axioms or first principles, to which the mind gives its assent as soon as they are proposed, and the terms are understood. There are also some truths, which, although not intuitive, are nearly such, because the mind arrives almost instantly at the conclusion. But the general character of human knowledge is, that it is successive. The riches of the mind, like external wealth, are acquired by accumulation. New objects and new relations of objects, daily present themselves to our senses; and from truths which we know, we infer other truths by a longer or a shorter train of reasoning. Thus our knowledge is discursive. But the infinite understanding of God receives no accession of ideas. The term infinite, which we apply to it, proves an accession to be impossible. He sees all things, as we see axioms by intuition. Eyes are ascribed to him to denote his knowledge, and to signify that it comprehends the whole system of things, as the human eye surveys at a glance the whole visible horizon. It follows, that what is called *media scientia*, or the knowledge of events through their causes, cannot be properly attributed to him, because it is a discursive process, or implies the inference of one thing from another, and consequently a succession of ideas. There is no progression from ignorance to knowledge in the Divine mind, which was from all eternity omniscient.

Hence it is evident, that the knowledge of God is immutable, as I shewed in a former lecture; and I proceed, therefore, to remark, that it is distinct. This is true also of human knowledge, to a certain extent. We have a distinct knowledge of mathematical truths, of facts which we have witnessed, and of the existence of objects which we perceive by our senses. On the other hand, we are ignorant of the essences of all things; we have no conception of the relation between their properties and their essences, or how the former inhere in the latter; and our ideas of many things are general and obscure. But all things are naked and opened to the eyes of God, τετραχηλισμενα as an apostle says,* as manifest to him as the interior of an animal is to us, when it has been fairly divided and spread out for inspection. An infinite understanding is incapable of oversight, of misapprehension, or of taking a hasty and inaccurate survey. Every object, every quality of every object, every relation which it bears, every thing which may be predicated of it, whether it be animate or inanimate, all is before God, and is as thoroughly known as if his attention were fixed upon it alone. Among the many millions of the human race, every individual may truly say, "Thou, God, seest me."

In the last place, The knowledge of God is infallible. There is no mistake in his apprehension of things, and there is nothing like conjecture. Future events are as certainly known as present, because, although they may be contingent in respect of the agents, or may be produced by the free volition of men, they are future, not contingently but necessarily, to him who has purposed to bring them to pass. But as this is manifest from what has been already said, any farther illustration is unnecessary.

Any passages of Scripture which may seem to be inconsistent with the Divine omniscience, will perplex only the ignorant, and are easily disposed of. When God is said to have come down to see the city and tower which were building on the plain of Babylon,† that person would be justly laughed at who should suppose, either that he could literally descend, or that it was necessary to change his place, in order to know what was going on upon earth. When, again, he represents himself as looking that his vineyard should bring forth good grapes, whereas it brought forth wild grapes,* it would be the height of absurdity to take the words in their literal meaning, and imagine that he was really disappointed. Every body knows that God is speaking of himself after the manner of men, who in order to see an object more distinctly, draw near to it, and when they have arranged the means, expect the usual result. The two passages teach us, that God was perfectly acquainted with the transaction at Babel; and that, after the pains which he had bestowed upon his ancient people, it was solely owing to their own perverseness, that they were not made wiser and better.

The consideration of the Divine omniscience is calculated to check the lofty thoughts which we are too apt to entertain of ourselves. We often see men proud of their talents, and sometimes so much elated as presumptuously to pronounce judgment upon God himself; to censure his dispensations, as if a different procedure would have been wiser; to criticise his word, and refuse to give credit to its plain declarations, because reason cannot comprehend them. Thus finite measures that which is infinite. Such is the impious arrogance of an insignificant creature, who only yesterday began to know any thing, is puzzled by the most common occurrences, and finds mysteries in a grain of sand. Let him reflect upon an infinite understanding, and shrink within himself, saying, "I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the Holy."†

There are many important lessons which are taught by this attribute of our Creator. It admonishes us to beware of sin, since he is the constant witness of our actions; and to study sincerity in all things, and particularly in our religious profession, because our motives are distinctly seen by him. It encourages good men to put their trust in him, and to commit all their affairs to his disposal; for a particular providence, which is the source of so much consolation, is founded on his infinite knowledge. The very hairs of our heads are numbered; and as nothing can befal us without his knowledge, so every event is under the direction of his wisdom and goodness. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."‡

The omniscience of God encourages humble supplication in every season of need. There is no cause of fear that the prayers of the righteous will not be heard, or that their sighs and tears will escape his notice, since he knows the thoughts and desires of the heart. There is no danger of being overlooked amidst the multitude of supplicants who daily and hourly present their various petitions, for an infinite mind is capable of paying the same attention to millions as if only one individual were soliciting its notice. The want of appropriate language, the impossibility of giving expression to the deep feelings of the soul, will not hinder their success; because before they attempt to speak, he knows what they would say. "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."‖

In a word, what a powerful excitement is it to our duty, that He is looking on who approves of every honest endeavour to please him, and will abundantly recompense it! "A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."§

* Heb. iv. 13. † Gen. xi. 5.

* Isa. v. 2. † Prov. xxx. 3. ‡ 2 Chron. xvi. 9.
‖ Isa. lxv. 24. § Mal. iii. 16, 17.

LECTURE XXII.

ON GOD.

Wisdom of God: distinguished from Knowledge—Idea of Wisdom—Proofs of Wisdom in Creation: in Providence: in Redemption.

Having considered the knowledge of God, I proceed to speak of his wisdom. These are easily distinguishable. Knowledge is the simple apprehension of things as they are, as the eye perceives the objects presented to it; wisdom is the arrangement of our ideas in proper order, and in such a train as to produce some useful practical result. The instrument of acquiring knowledge is the understanding alone; but wisdom implies volition, or a purpose to effect an end, and the choice of the means by which it will be accomplished. In creatures they are often separated. Wisdom cannot exist without knowledge, but knowledge may exist without wisdom; and, accordingly, there are men possessing very extensive information, who in their conduct give many proofs of thoughtlessness and folly. In an all-perfect Being, they are necessarily conjoined; omniscience supplies the materials of infinite wisdom. As God knows all his creatures, all their powers and qualities, all the purposes to which they may be rendered subservient, all the relations in which they may be placed, and all the possible consequences of all possible events, he is able infallibly to determine what are the most proper ends to be pursued, and what are the fittest means of effecting them; as he is perfectly just and good, there is no principle in his nature which might prevent him from choosing what is best; and as his power is infinite, no obstacle can occur to the execution of his plans.

All nations have agreed in ascribing wisdom to the Supreme Being, and have been led to this conclusion by the obvious and manifold proofs of it, which will be afterwards considered. "Man is wise," says Cicero, "and so therefore is God;" rightly judging that a superior nature must possess what is truly excellent in man; and that if wisdom had not existed in the Creator, it would not have been found in the creature. Revelation pronounces him to be "the only wise God,"* thus seeming to appropriate this attribute to him, to the exclusion of every other being from a share in it; yet we know that men and angels are possessed of it in a certain degree, and we must therefore understand the sacred writer to speak comparatively, and to signify that their wisdom, which is dependent and derived, and his wisdom, which is necessary and essential, do not admit of comparison; and when brought into competition, that of creatures, so limited in its nature, so soon exhausted by a few expedients, is altogether unworthy of notice.

Wisdom consists in the choice of proper ends and proper means; design simply implies that the agent has some object in view, and does not act at random. But his design may be trifling or degrading; it may prove that he is destitute of sound judgment; and hence, whatever art he may discover in gaining his object, we do not give him the praise of wisdom. If a man should employ an ingenious and complicated apparatus to effect a purpose which is not worth half the expense, or which might have been effected without any waste of time and labour, instead of thinking him wise, we should pronounce him to be a fool. The end must be worthy of the agent, and of the attention bestowed upon it. It may be said, that we are incompetent to judge what is worthy of God, what it would become a Being so far exalted above us to do, and that it would be less presumptuous in a fly endowed with intelligence, to pronounce upon the counsels and operations of man. We acknowledge our incompetence beforehand, and our inability to enter fully into his designs, even after they are revealed; but since God has endowed us with some portion of understanding, there is no arrogance in venturing to say, when we see him pursuing certain ends, that they appear to us to be suitable to the dignity of his character. There is no arrogance in maintaining, that it is worthy of him to glorify himself by the manifestation of his attributes, to communicate happiness to other beings whom his almighty power has created, to uphold the moral government of the universe, to promote the interests of righteousness and truth. Now, these are the very ends which appear to be the objects of the Divine dispensations; and we are so far from perceiving any thing in them incongruous to the idea of an all-perfect Being, that they harmonize with our conceptions of the transcendent excellence of his character.

It is not less characteristic of wisdom to choose fit means, than to aim at worthy ends. We should never account him a wise man, who formed excellent designs, but failed to execute them from not knowing what expedients it was necessary to employ, or from want of skill in arranging and applying them. It is here that a trial is made of his knowledge of the powers, qualities, relations, and tendencies of things. There are persons whose minds are fertile in suggesting what it would be of advantage to do, but who are incapable of executing their own plans, and must commit them to others, who are superior in invention and dexterity; and the subordinate details may require greater strength of intellect than the original conception. In contemplating the wisdom of God, we must take into the account the whole process, the previous steps as well as the final result. In estimating the wisdom of an agent, we first attend to the object which he had in view, and secondly, observe the method by which he effected it.

In this argument, we assume the doctrine of final causes. A final cause is that for which any thing is done, the end which an agent has in view, and to which his operations are directed. It is called a cause, because it excites him to act; and a final cause, because when it is effected his object is gained. The proofs of final causes in the universe are denied only by atheists, who wish to obliterate the evidence that an intelligent Being is its author. How they have succeeded in this attempt so revolting to reason, we have formerly seen. It may be as rationally denied, that there are marks of design in the construction of a watch, as that there are any in the system of nature; that the ultimate intention of the watch was to point out the hour, as that the ultimate intention of the mechanism of an animal body is the sustenance and motion of the animal.

Let us in the first place, collect the proofs of Divine wisdom from the visible creation. "How manifold, O Lord, are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all, and the earth is full of thy riches."* Instances of curious contrivance present themselves on every side. We observe a wonderful adaptation of one thing to another, with a view to the production of a particular result, and the same purpose accomplished by such a diversity of means, as cannot fail to convince us, that the whole is the work of an intelligent Being, rich in expedients. As the proofs of wisdom in creation constitute only one department of the subject, we cannot go into a minute detail, but must confine ourselves to a few particulars, and even of these give only a general account. I might refer you to the argument formerly adduced† for the existence of God from the marks of design in his works, which prove an intelligent cause; but it would be improper to pass over a topic so rich in displays of his wisdom, although we shall be led to repeat in substance the observations formerly made.

* 1 Tim. i. 17.

* Ps. civ. 24. † See before, pp. 85—7.

Let us attend to the arrangement of the system to which we belong. In the centre is placed the sun, the great source of light and heat, who dispenses without intermission his influences to the planets, which perform their revolutions around him. He is at rest, and they are in motion; but they are retained in their orbits by his attractive power; and the mighty machine is incessantly working without confusion, or the slightest deviation of any of its parts. How much more admirable is the solar system as now understood, than it appeared to the ancient philosophers, who imagined that the sun daily wheeled his rapid course around the earth, which, in comparison of him, is so diminutive! By the motion of the earth, the purposes which were supposed to be accomplished by the motion of the sun, are effected in a more simple manner. By its diurnal motion around its own axis, the different parts of its surface are successively presented to the sun, and the vicissitude of day and night is produced, so necessary to the existence and well-being of animals and vegetables. In the day, men and animals carry on their various operations, and vegetables are nourished by his rays, and adorned with beautiful colours: in the night, all nature reposes in the shades of darkness; plants sleep as well as living creatures; and the vigour of our bodies and minds, which were exhausted by labour and thought, is recreated. Who does not see, in this case, a wise provision of our Maker? By the annual circuit of the earth, we enjoy the change of seasons, which delights us by a variety of scene, and is subservient to the purposes of vegetation, on which the life of all terrestrial animals depends. In winter the earth rests, and repairs its strength; and during the subsequent seasons, that wonderful process takes place which clothes the trees and fields with verdure, and by the multiplication of the seed deposited in the soil, rewards the labour of the husbandman. We may remark the wisdom of God also in the relative situation of the earth to the sun. It has been placed where it is, and not in the orbit of any other planet, with an exact adaptation to the nature of its inhabitants. Whether it had been brought nearer, or removed to a greater distance, excessive heat or excessive cold would have proved equally fatal to animal and vegetable life. All living beings must have perished, unless their constitution had been changed, and the water in seas, lakes, and rivers, would have been either evaporated, or frozen. Here then we have an instance of adjustment, which furnishes a new proof of the Creator's wisdom.

Let us turn our attention to the constitution of the earth itself, and we shall perceive, that by the same wisdom, it is fitted for all the purposes which it was intended to serve. It is composed of various substances, adapted to a variety of uses; but what I request you at present to observe, is the nature of the substance lying on the surface. Had the earth been covered with rock or sand, it would have been an unfit habitation for man, because it could not have afforded the means of subsistence; but the upper stratum is a soft mould, into which the roots of plants penetrate, and in which seeds find a matrix, where the vegetable principle is evolved and nourished; for it should also be considered, that the soil is endowed with certain virtues, and supplies the pabulum of plants, in consequence of which they rise to maturity, and perfect their fruit. We observe that a large proportion of the surface is covered with water; but the objection against the extent of the ocean, as encroaching too much upon the habitation of men and terrestrial animals, is absurd while there are such tracts of land as yet unoccupied, and proceeds, besides, from stupid inattention to the purposes which are served by the ocean. Not only does it open an intercourse between distant nations, and furnish the means of easily and speedily conveying the productions of one country to another, but it is the inexhaustible source of those exhalations which descend upon us in rain and dew. And as the quantity of these is upon the whole not more than sufficient to supply rivers and springs, and to nourish the herbs, and plants, and trees, which clothe the surface of the earth, it is evident, that if the boundaries of the ocean had been compressed, all nature would have languished, animals and vegetables would have perished, and our globe would have been converted into a dreary wilderness. We formerly took notice of the wisdom displayed in the inequalities of the earth; and we then stated, that without mountains there would have been no springs and rivers. We may now remark, that a smooth uniform plain, however much adorned, would have been far less beautiful than the scenery which now enchants us by its diversified features, at one time gentle, and at another majestic; and that room is provided for a greater variety of plants and animals, some preferring cold and elevated regions, while others seek low and sheltered spots. The whole is planned with an evident regard to different ends, and each of these is secured by expedients varied with admirable skill.

Let us, in the next place, take a view of the living creatures which inhabit the earth, and we shall perceive many proofs of Divine wisdom in their bodies, and particularly in our own, which, according to a sacred writer, is "fearfully and wonderfully made." In considering man as related to the material objects amidst which he is placed, it cannot fail to strike us as an instance of wise adaptation, that he is furnished with organs of sense to perceive them and their qualities, the knowledge of which is necessary, not only to his comfort, but to his very existence. When we examine those organs, the ear for example, or the eye, with which we are better acquainted, both the design and the workmanship are calculated to excite the highest admiration. We cannot tell, indeed, how we see or hear by means of these organs, but we discover a contrivance, of which the obvious intention is to convey the corresponding sensations to our minds. That a body so small as the eye should perceive not only near but distant objects, should bring under our view the earth and the heavens, should make us exactly acquainted with the figure, size, colour, and relative position of so many bodies, should discern the members of a minute insect, and contemplate the host of stars marshalled in the sky; that this little organ should be capable of taking so wide a range, and performing so many wonders, is a proof that it is not the work of chance, but of a Divine artist, who is wonderful in counsel. Among the boasted productions of human art, where shall we find any thing to be compared to it? When we proceed in the examination of our bodies, the evidences of wisdom multiply upon us. What a variety of functions is performed in this microcosm! what a provision of means and instruments! how delicate and regular the process! The bones support the body, and are articulated that it may bend in different directions, and be moved from one place to another. The flesh is composed of muscles, which being attached to the bones, and possessing the power of contraction, give them the necessary motion. The waste to which the body is subject, is repaired by its capacity to receive and digest food, and to convert it into its own substance; and by a curious apparatus the aliment is distributed to every part of our frame. The expenditure is constant, and so is the supply. We cannot live without air, and respiration is carried on by the mouth and lungs. The blood circulates by night and by day, and the secretions go on with perfect regularity when not interrupted by disease. There is one proof of the wisdom of our Maker, which deserves particular attention. While some of the operations, which are necessary to our well-being, are dependent upon our will, others of equal importance are involuntary. We respire, the

blood flows, and many other processes are continued in sleep as well as when we are awake, for this obvious reason, that the suspension of them would prove fatal to life. They are therefore taken out of our hands, and reserved in his own by the Great First Cause, who never slumbers or sleeps, and who lives and acts in every point of the universe. There is manifest wisdom in this arrangement. Man is left to do what he can do for himself; but when his power would be inadequate, another agency interposes to perfect the design. In many respects, the structure of the inferior animals resembles our own; and when a difference is observable, it affords a new illustration of wisdom, because it is the result of a design to fit them for the different functions belonging to their nature, and the mode of life allotted to them. On this ground, religion may confidently triumph over atheism. Its demonstrations can be opposed only by malignity struggling against conviction; or if there is any man, acquainted but superficially with the organization of living bodies, who denies that they are the work of an intelligent Maker, we may, after the example of the Psalmist, pronounce him to be a fool.

We might strengthen this argument by a review of the intellectual and active powers of the human mind, from which it would appear with how much wisdom they are adapted to the condition of man as an inhabitant of this world, and as in a state of preparation for a future and higher existence. His mental frame is not less wonderful than his corporeal. But I shall conclude with observing, that the wisdom of God is apparent in the instincts by which the irrational animals are governed. By instincts we mean certain inclinations or propensities to act in a way conducting to a specific result, without, as we suppose, any knowledge of the result, any anticipation of the consequence. Nothing is more admirable than the sagacity with which they choose the most proper places for their habitations, the dexterity displayed in constructing them, and the care which they take of their young, brooding over them, bringing food to them, training them up for their peculiar kind of life, and defending them with courage and with art. Yet we do not suppose, that they are possessed of reason, that they improve by the experience of their predecessors, that they deliberate and concert plans, that they calculate probabilities, and look forward to the future. What then is the wisdom which we admire in them? It is not their own, but the wisdom of their Creator, who in a manner inexplicable to us, directs them to ends of which they are not aware. It is not by its own understanding, that the bee constructs its cells with such attention to strength and capacity; it is not from its own knowledge of the approaching disappearance of the flowers from which it extracts its food, that it gathers honey in the fine season, and lays it up in store for winter. No; the bee is under superior guidance, and it is when describing the operations of this little insect, that a heathen poet gives it as the opinion of some, that bees have a portion of the Divine mind, which pervades all nature, the earth, the sea, and the heavens:

> Esse apibus partem divinæ mentis, et haustus
> Æthereos dixere.*
>
> That bees, a portion of the Mind divine
> And heavenly inspiration, do possess,
> Some have alleged.

They rightly judged, that its wonderful contrivances did not originate from itself. "Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?"† No; in the economy of the lower animals, we perceive the wisdom of the Creator, who purposing to preserve the individual and the species, guides them by his mysterious influence, with a certainty which the superior but fallible reason of man seldom attains.

In a lecture, of which the wisdom of God in creation forms only a part, there is room for nothing more than general observations. Perhaps, a stronger impression would be made by selecting an instance or two, and giving a minute illustration of them. We should find much to admire in a pile of grass, in the wing of a fly, or in the sting of a gnat. God has been said to be *maximus in minimis*, to appear greatest in the least things; not however, because there is more wisdom in the formation of these, than in the structure of creatures of a superior size, but because we are more astonished at the variety displayed within such narrow limits. It is truly wonderful, that in the most diminutive insect, in a mere living point, in some cases invisible to the unassisted eye, there should be combined all the parts essential to a perfect animal, organs of sight, and smell, and taste, instruments of motion, and vessels for circulating the blood and digesting its food.

Let us proceed, in the second place, to collect the proofs of Divine wisdom from providence, by which we mean God's natural and moral government of the world by his own immediate but invisible agency, and by the instrumentality of second causes. So far as providence is employed in upholding the material system, and the living creatures who are void of reason, it is the continued exercise of the power by which they were originally produced; and any observations which might be made, have been anticipated in speaking of their motions and instincts. I shall, therefore, confine your attention to his government of men, considered as moral agents, as beings possessed of reason, will, and active powers.

First, his wisdom appears in the order which he preserves among them, notwithstanding the tendency of their nature to throw all things into confusion. It ought to be considered, that the subjects of his government are not innocent and holy creatures, who reverence his laws, and are disposed to comply with his will; but that they are self-willed and rebellious, driven headlong by impetuous passions, proud, jealous of their rights, envious, revengeful, ambitious, and so engrossed by a regard to themselves, as to be ready to sacrifice the interests of others to their views of honour, wealth, and pleasure. In short, the human mind, as it is now constituted, contains all the elements of discord; and we may judge what mischief these would produce if full scope were allowed to them, by observing the misery which they occasionally entail upon families, nations, and churches. Their operations are prevented or moderated, not by simple power, which would be inconsistent with moral government, as it would suspend free agency and convert men into passive instruments of the Divine will, but by means suitable to their nature, and illustrative of the wisdom of the Supreme Ruler; by his moral laws, some regard to which remains in minds not utterly abandoned; by conscience which retains a degree of authority, and overawes them by its remonstrances and forebodings; by the institutions of civil society, which springing out of the circumstances of human nature, must be considered as a part of the Divine administration; by opposing one passion to another, and so counteracting or weakening its effect, for example, withholding the revengeful man from his purpose, by the fear of evil to himself, and the sensual man by the apprehension of the loss of character or health; or by opposing the passions of one man to those of another, so that both are impeded, and neither can accomplish his design, or accomplish it to the extent which he had meditated. In this manner, God stills the tumults of the people without a miracle, and without a visible interposition. The simplicity and efficacy of the means afford a demonstration of his wisdom. His government goes on

* Virg. Georg. iv. 220. † Job xxxix. 26, 27.

silently and uniformly to effect its design, without any infringement of the established laws. Men retain their liberty, and yet are unconsciously subject to restraint; and although there is much irregularity in human conduct, and sometimes dreadful disorders take place, yet the effects are mitigated, and such a degree of order is maintained as is necessary to the preservation of our species, and the final development of the Divine counsels. He makes the wrath of man praise him, and the remainder of it he restrains.*

In the second place, while he operates silently and secretly, his wisdom is seen mixing such events with his dispensations, as are calculated to keep alive a sense of his existence and government. Were the affairs of the world to proceed in a uniform train, he might be overlooked and forgotten, especially as the objects of sense have a powerful influence upon us, and to sinful creatures the idea of a holy and righteous Governor is not welcome. Men might easily let go a principle which they are not desirous to retain. To counteract this tendency of the human heart to atheism, is the design of those occasional interpositions of providence, which proclaim in the ear of reason, that "verily he is a God who judgeth in the earth." Of this nature are the circumstances which sometimes accompany the rise, and particularly the fall of kingdoms and empires; to which we may add earthquakes, pestilences, and desolating tempests, that for a time at least make religious impressions upon the minds of most men; wonderful escapes from danger, favours unexpectedly and strangely conferred, and judgments executed suddenly and visibly upon notorious offenders. "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands."† Such events are not miraculous, and a cool-headed philosopher might often be able to trace the chain of natural causes by which they are effected; but they are so disposed as to carry away the mind to an invisible Agent, to whose will all the parts of nature are subordinate. As without some sense of a superintending providence, the laws and institutions of society would be inadequate to preserve the peace of the world, the advantage of such dispensations, even to the temporal interests of mankind, is obvious. They prevent the belief of a higher Power who is friendly to justice and humanity, and is the avenger of crimes, from being utterly extinguished. At the same time, wisdom is displayed in the rare occurrence of such interpositions. The design of them is not to establish a perfect moral administration in the present life, but to give hints and notions of one. Were they frequent and regular, they might become familiar, and pass for common events; their occasional nature rouses the slumbering attention of mortals and reminds them that there is justice in the universe, although its operations are not yet fully developed.

In the third place, the wisdom of God appears in the mode of conducting his designs. The means employed often seem inadequate; but the result shews, that the foolishness of God is wiser than men. The greatest revolution in the world was effected, as we shall afterwards see, by persons, who, in respect of character, talents, rank, and influence, were totally disqualified for the arduous undertaking. Sometimes his purposes are accomplished by a train of circumstances, the tendency of which is to defeat them; he sows the seeds of sorrow, that a full harvest of joy may be gathered; and conducts to glory by a previous course of painful and humiliating discipline. Joseph was sold as a slave, and afterwards committed to prison under a false accusation, that he might rise to the highest honours in the kingdom of Egypt; and a succession of calamities befel his father, which terminated in the preservation of himself and his family from destruction. "Joseph is not," exclaimed the afflicted patriarch, "Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me."* It is thus that the physician, by his consummate skill converts substances in themselves deleterious, into valuable medicines. Sometimes his designs seem to be at the point of failure, when they are on the very eve of accomplishment, that the unexpected issue may be seen to be his own work. The family of David had been long stript of its ancient splendour, the sceptre had been wrested from it, and the royal line had sunk into obscurity and was almost forgotten, when the blessed virgin brought forth her Son, who was elevated to the throne of the universe, and shall reign for ever and ever. "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old."† Sometimes his designs are accomplished by persons who have no knowledge of them, and aim at very different purposes. Nebuchadnezzar was the rod of God's anger, with which he severely chastised his rebellious people. But the sole object of the king of Babylon was to gratify his ambition and avarice by conquest and spoil; and, in like manner, other monarchs, and millions of their subjects have been the unconscious instruments of Providence, which enlists the worst passions and the worst men in its service, and is continually bringing good out of evil. "Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and to cut off nations not a few."† Sometimes they are employed as the ministers of his will, who not only have no intention to serve him, but exert themselves to oppose and frustrate his designs. His wisdom is displayed, not only in overruling their opposition, as he could easily do by his irresistible power, but in making it hold the relation of a mean to the end, so that his design is directly fulfilled by their attempts to defeat it. It was the object of the blasphemy and persecution of the Jews, to disprove the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, and of their putting him to death, to terminate his career; but in their whole proceedings the predictions which marked him out were fulfilled, and the world was redeemed by the effusion of his blood. "Of a truth against thy holy child Jesus both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."‖ In short, the wisdom of God is manifold. It attains its ends in every possible way, by likely and unlikely means, by the cheerful co-operation of some and the perverse obstinacy of others; and nothing can raise our admiration of it higher than the consideration that all creatures, with their passions and projects, are subservient to it; that it gives a plan and a harmony to the seemingly disjointed and embroiled affairs of the earth; that it superintends at once the concerns of a whole system, of a world, of a nation, of a family, and of an individual; and that the result of its varied operations will be happy and glorious.

Lastly, the wisdom of God appears in so ordering the present state of things, as to give notice of another state, and a judgment to come. We have already seen, that the occasional exercise of justice in the punishment of sin, is an indication of a moral Governor, who may be expected to reveal himself more clearly in this character, in some succeeding stage of our existence; and my present design is to shew, that there are other circumstances which corroborate this conclusion. Now this purpose is accomplished by the promiscuous distribution of good and evil, taken in connexion with the intimations

* Ps. lxxvi. 10. † Ps. ix. 16.

* Gen. xlii. 36. † Amos ix. 11. ‡ Isa. x. 7.
‖ Acts. iv. 27.

already referred to, that the Supreme Being is just. Finding that justice is an attribute which belongs to him, we are unavoidably led to believe, that he would unformly act agreeably to it, were there nothing in the present state of things to prevent him. As he is the Author of nature, we cannot suppose that the whole system is so disposed as never to afford opportunity for a full display of this perfection; but we rather infer, that there is somewhere in his wide dominions a place in which men shall receive exactly according to their deeds. Were the conduct of men evidently the ground of their present treatment, it might be thought by those whose views were not enlarged by revelation, that the plan of Providence respecting them is completed at death; but the obvious inequality of their lots suggests a different conclusion. Hence the heathen themselves, observing that there was no certain rule according to which the measures of good and evil were dispensed, entertained the notion of a state beyond the grave, in which the righteous would be rewarded, and the wicked punished: "No man knoweth love or hatred by all that is before him." The constitution under which we are placed might be shewn to be on other accounts the best for the present time; but we have only now to observe, that this mixed scene is a premonition of a new order of things, and thus serves to support the authority of religion. It is a proof of wisdom, that while the present administration is adapted to the design of God respecting us in this world, it reminds us of another where our final interest lies, and is fitted to excite us to pursue such conduct as becomes accountable beings. If this is manifestly the period of trial, the judgment will come to rectify all apparent disorders.

Let us, in the third place, observe the displays of divine wisdom in redemption. As it is the last and greatest work of God, we may expect it to afford the most glorious manifestation of his character. The Scripture represents the perfection which we are at present considering as receiving a high illustration from it, when it says, that God "has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;"* and the displays of it as wonderfully diversified, when it says further, "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."† In order to perceive the wisdom of a plan, it is necessary first to know the end or the ends proposed, and then to inquire what means have been employed. Now, the ends which God had in view in our redemption by Jesus Christ, were, to glorify his own perfections, to illustrate the authority of his law, and to humble our pride; and it was only in subservience to these ends that he purposed to raise our fallen race from misery to happiness. Let us observe how these ends have been accomplished.

First, God purposed to glorify himself in the redemption of man. His glory, indeed, is the ultimate end of all his works; but when we say so, we ought to be aware of falling into the error of supposing that he was actuated by a desire of display analogous to the principle of vanity in man, that the manifestation of his excellencies was in any sense necessary, or that it was at all connected with his happiness. What we mean by his doing all things for his glory is, that he has acted, and could not but act on all occasions in a manner worthy of himself. In certain cases, there is scope for the manifestation only of some of his perfections, as of goodness towards innocent, and of justice towards guilty creatures; but the redemption of sinners embraced the manifestation of both. It may be supposed indeed, that the exercise of justice was not so necessary, but that it might have been dispensed with to make way for the exercise of benevolence; but, besides that this notion is at variance with the uniform language of revelation, we can seem ground in reason for thinking that the moral Governor of the universe has nothing to consult but the happiness of his subjects, and will yield up his rights when these interfere with their interests. The wisdom of men is capable only of conceiving the clumsy expedient of merging the one in the other; but the wisdom of God has given to both equal prominence, and harmonized their claims by an unexpected and admirable contrivance, namely, the substitution of a righteous person, who should bear the punishment of the guilty, and render the exercise of mercy to them perfectly consistent with justice. The thought is now familiar; but it would not have occurred to us without suggestion, and it originated in that understanding which alone comprehends the scheme of universal government, and the best methods of attaining its ends. But, where could a person be found, at once willing and qualified to interpose between heaven and earth, and to reconcile their opposite interests? As men were all involved in the same condemnation, none of them could assist his brethren; and besides that angels were too remotely connected with us to interfere in such a case, they could not die, nor would such sufferings as one of them was capable of enduring, have been admitted as an equivalent for those of the millions of the redeemed. Divine wisdom was displayed in providing a man to die for men; a man derived from the same root, yet perfectly holy, although all the other branches were corrupt; a man, who by submitting to the infliction of justice, glorified it more highly than it would have been glorified by the execution of the penalty upon us; a man, who could conquer death, and recover the forfeited inheritance of immortality. Such a man is Jesus Christ, allied to us by his participation of our common nature, yet superior to us by the possession of the divine; born without spot, of a virgin, and at the same time the Son of God. The incarnation is a great mystery; it is a new thing which God has created in the earth; an event of which no finite mind could have formed an idea beforehand: but now when the Eternal Word has been made flesh, it appears to be worthy of infinite wisdom, as being the best and the only expedient for accomplishing the ultimate end of redemption, the harmony of the Divine attributes in the restoration of a fallen world.

Secondly, God purposed to establish the authority of his law, to which men had refused submission, and in doing so, had called in question the reasonableness and equity of its precepts. This design was not accomplished by the method of human legislators, by annexing a severer penalty to the laws, for a more awful sanction could not have been conceived; death in the full extent of the term, being the greatest evil which human nature could suffer. It was effected, by giving an example of obedience to the law, in which the justice of its demands was solemnly recognized; by a great practical lesson, calculated to impress the minds of all intelligent creatures, when they saw the Son of God come down from heaven to glorify his Father by the exact fulfilment of his will. It is thus demonstrated, that the law is not an arbitrary institution, but is founded in the nature of things, the relations subsisting between God and his creatures; that it is of eternal obligation, and can on no account be dispensed with; for obedience was prescribed to a person, than whom none is greater in the universe, as the only condition on which his desire for our happiness could be fulfilled. If God is the moral Governor of men, and if it was his design, after the entrance of sin, to vindicate the righteousness, and to evince the immutability of his law, no method was so effectual to create profound reverence for it in the minds of his subjects. To men, whose notions of what is right and fit are strangely perverted, there seems to be something mean and degrading in submission to the Divine law; and hence

* Eph. i. 8. † Eph. iii. 10.

strict conformity to moral rules is stigmatized as preciseness and monkish austerity. It is a surrender of their natural liberty; it narrows the range of their enjoyments; it betrays a servility and tameness of spirit quite contrary to the unfettered freedom with which arrogant mortals claim a right to act for themselves. How are the folly and impiety of such thoughts exposed, when the Sovereign of heaven and earth voluntarily submits to this law; when he who is the Source of happiness to men and angels, in his assumed nature prefers obedience to his ease and to his necessary food! From his voluntary subjection the law has derived greater glory, than it had suffered dishonour by the multiplied crimes of its natural subjects. He has exhibited an example to be imitated by all, and by the influence of which upon the hearts and consciences of his genuine disciples, the authority of the law is restored, and its precepts are willingly, although not perfectly obeyed. To every enlightened mind, holiness appears to be the most honourable distinction of human nature, and the restraints of religion to be perfect liberty; and the result of our Saviour's mission is the establishment of the moral kingdom of God.

Thirdly, God purposed to humble our pride, which was the cause of our original revolt, and is incompatible with the sentiments of reverence, dependence, gratitude and submission which all creatures, and particularly guilty creatures should feel towards their Maker. He saves us; but it is not as some imagine, by a milder law, which supposes our moral power although impaired, not to be utterly lost; for in this case we should have claimed the recompense as our due; but by appointing his Son to fulfil the old law in our room, and bestowing the reward solely in consideration of his merit. He sanctifies us; but our holiness is not the result of our own exertions aided by his grace, but exclusively of the agency of his Spirit, who forms new dispositions within us as passive subjects of his power; so that the greatest saint has nothing in himself to flatter his vanity more than the most profligate sinner. The whole plan of our restoration is so contrived as to leave this impression upon our minds, that we are absolute debtors to God; that our sins are our own, but our virtues are his gifts; and that as from him our salvation originated, so to him all the glory of it should be ascribed. The lofty looks of men are humbled, and the haughtiness of man is made low, and the Lord alone is exalted.*

In all these instances we perceive wisdom in the device of worthy ends, and of the fittest means. There is another proof of the wisdom of God in redemption, to which I shall briefly advert, as it will afterwards occur in another view as a display of his power. Had he employed in the publication of the scheme of redemption, men of learning, eloquence, and worldly influence, the success of Christianity might have been attributed to natural causes, and it might have been regarded in future ages as a contrivance of the first preachers to impose upon mankind with a view to their personal interests. By committing it to the ministry of men, illiterate, obscure, and contemptible in the eyes of the world, he has demonstrated the Divinity of its origin, and furnished an argument by which our faith is confirmed, and the unreasonableness of infidelity is evinced. The cause must have failed in the hands of such advocates, had they not enjoyed the patronage of heaven. Thus it appears that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, or that by means which human reason would have rejected as incompetent, the most important end has been gained; while by the opposite plan, which would have approved itself to our wisdom, the design would have been defeated. While the talents and energies of men were brought forward to view, the agency of God would have been concealed.

* Isa. ii. 11.

We should learn to be modest and cautious in our judgment of the works and dispensations of the Almighty. In examining a work of man, all the parts of which, so far as we understood them, appeared to be skilfully contrived, it would be rash to condemn those which we did not understand. Much greater is the presumption of those who subject the wisdom of God to their limited and erring reason. It requires no great humility to acknowledge that many things may be accounted for, although we cannot tell how; that what we call irregularity may be consistent with order, and that apparent blemishes may be real excellencies: that a scheme comprehending time and eternity is beyond the reach of our faculties; and that there is no searching of an infinite understanding.

In this wisdom we should confide. Vain are the thoughts and counsels of man; and vain are his anxieties about the morrow. They vex themselves in vain, who acknowledge no providence but their own foresight, and burden themselves with the care of their own happiness. None can enjoy true peace, none can feel themselves secure, but they who commit their way to the Lord. He will guide them by his counsel, and afterward receive them to his glory. We know that under his direction all things are working together for good.

LECTURE XXIII.

ON GOD.

Power of God—Idea of Power—Connexion of Cause and Effect—Some apparent limitations of the Divine Power stated and explained—Displays of Power in the Works of Creation, of Providence, and of Redemption.

Some subjects may have no connexion with our duty and our happiness, and yet may excite no small share of curiosity. We are strongly impelled to extend the boundaries of knowledge, and to push our inquiries into regions where no valuable fruit can be gathered. Surrounded with mysteries on all sides, we may anxiously wish that the veil were lifted up, which conceals from our eager eyes the wonders of the material and spiritual world. It would gratify us to be admitted behind the scene, and to inspect the machinery by which the great revolutions in nature are effected; to discover how the immense bodies which we see pursuing their course in the fields of space, were first set in motion, and by what cause they have been retained for ages in their respective orbits, so that there is no irregularity or interference. It would be delightful to trace the process of vegetation, which is renewed from year to year, and invests the earth with beauty, while it ministers abundantly to our wants. It would be still more desirable to become intimately and fully acquainted with ourselves, to understand what the living principle within us is, and by what tie the constituent parts of our nature are so closely united, that notwithstanding the essential difference between matter and spirit, they feel a mutual sympathy, and co-operate with perfect harmony. But although success should equal our highest expectations, we have no reason to think that the enlargement of our views would in any degree fit us better for acting our part as accountable beings, and contribute to prepare us for the future state, in which our well-being will not depend upon intellectual attainments, but upon possession of genuine piety and holiness.

Our inquiries into the character of the Author of the universe are more sublime in their nature, and more important in their tendency. Every discovery is full of interest, because it is connected with our conduct and our hopes. It is therefore necessary to proceed in

the investigation with the utmost caution and circumspection, lest by admitting any thing foreign into our idea of God, or leaving out any thing essential, we should weaken or extinguish those sentiments of reverence and love, in which genuine piety consists. We ought to be the more upon our guard, because we are admonished by the errors of others, who have set limits to his perfections, have given undue prominence to one, to the concealment of the rest, or have placed him at such a distance from us, as to repress all the feelings and exercises of devotion. A Being eternal, immutable, and omnipresent, is an object of awful contemplation; but something is wanting to create an interest in him, to make us feel ourselves personally concerned in his character and proceedings. Aware that there is such a Being, we might occasionally turn our thoughts to him, but should have no motive to cultivate an acquaintance with him, if we believed that we had nothing to fear from his displeasure, or to hope from his favour. We must consider him as an active Being, who having given us life, continues to sustain us by his providence, and has us and all nature at his command. Power must enter into the idea of God, or our thoughts of him will be as cold and unaffecting as are those which respect persons to whom we stand in no relation, and on whom we are completely independent. Without power, his wisdom would be employed in arranging admirable but unexecuted plans; his goodness would expire in benevolent but ineffectual wishes; his justice would be merely a will to recompense actions according to their desert. Power is an essential attribute of God, and necessarily mixes with our practical views of his other perfections. Had not power belonged to him, his other perfections would not have been known; not a single world would have filled up a portion of the mighty void; there would have been neither man nor angel to employ his mind on the height of this great argument; nothing would have existed but himself, and he would have dwelt alone in eternal repose.

The power of God is his ability to do every thing which may be done, every thing which is consistent with the other perfections of his nature. We are led to assign this attribute to him, by what we experience in ourselves, and observe in the operations which are going on around us. It has been said, indeed, that "when we think that we perceive our mind acting upon matter, or one piece of matter acting upon another, we do in fact perceive only two objects or events contiguous and successive, the second of which is always found, in experience, to follow the first; but that we never perceive, either by external sense or by consciousness, that power, energy, or efficacy, which connects the one event with the other. By observing that the two events do always accompany each other, the imagination acquires a habit of going readily from the first to the second, and from the second to the first; and hence we are led to conceive a necessary connexion between them. But, in fact, there is neither necessity nor power in the objects we consider, but only in the mind that considers them; and even in the mind, this power or necessity is nothing but a determination of the fancy, acquired by habit, to pass from the idea of an object to that of its usual attendant." In this manner does Hume endeavour to prove that we can form no idea of power, or of any being endowed with power, much less, as he adds, of one endowed with infinite power. It is acknowledged that we do not perceive the connexion between cause and effect, and that, so far as we can distinctly trace it, it consists in constant sequence; that is, we perceive only that the one always follows the other. At the same time, it is certain that there is constant sequence where no person ever supposed the relation of cause and effect. Night follows day, or day follows night, according to the original order which we assign to them; but who ever imagined that the one is the cause of the other, that light produces darkness, or darkness produces light? It is evident, therefore, that there is something more in the relation of cause and effect than constant sequence, although this should be all that we are able to discover. It is certain, that although between the volition of my mind and the raising of my arm, I cannot explain the connexion, they are not independent events, because the one uniformly follows the other, while my volition has no effect upon any other piece of matter not belonging to my body. It is certain, that when my arm raises a stone, or when one stone impelling another, moves it from its place, the idea of power is suggested to my mind, in the one case, by the exertion of muscular strength, and in the other, by the visible change which is effected. To tell us that this is an act of imagination, which has acquired the habit of passing from the one event to the other, and that we have no idea of power, although there is not one more distinct in our minds, is to insult our understandings, and to attempt to deceive us by a palpable falsehood. It would be as much to the purpose, to tell us that we have no idea of sound and colour; but this would not serve the interests of atheism, by destroying the argument from cause and effect for the existence of an Author of nature. Power undoubtedly exists; all men believe it; it is one of their earliest and strongest conceptions; and if we do not find it in the immediate, or what we commonly call the second cause, we must seek it somewhere else. Were a man to reason fairly and consequentially from the doctrine, that the relation of cause and effect, as far as known to us, is merely constant sequence, he would conclude, that since the idea of power is forced upon us by observation and experience, since it is impossible to get rid of it, since it is absurd to resist the natural suggestions of our minds, if power is not in second causes, it must be in the First Cause; that his energy pervades all nature, and its several parts are instruments wielded by his arm. Thus, a speculation which originated in hostility to all religion, when corrected and conducted by right reason, terminates in the establishment of Theism. "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things."*

We are conscious of possessing power over our minds and our bodies. We can direct our thoughts to a particular subject, and move our bodies backward and forward, to the right or to the left. We can produce effects upon other bodies by the exertion of our natural strength. We observe also many changes going on in the earth and in the heavens, which we refer to an adequate cause. If from the idea of power which we have thus acquired, we remove every circumstance which indicates imperfection, as effort, labour and fatigue, and if we farther conceive it to be unlimited, embarrassed by no obstacle, and capable of producing every possible effect, we have the most complete idea of the power of God which we are able to form. The proofs, that power is one of his perfections, will afterwards be mentioned. Some have doubted his goodness and justice, and some have called in question his wisdom, because in some instances they could not perceive it; but his power has been acknowledged by all who believe his existence. That it is infinite power, or omnipotence, can as little be doubted. As there is nothing in the universe which he did not create, it is impossible that he should meet with any opposition from any part of it, or at least with successful opposition. All created power is necessarily dependent upon him, subject to his direction and control, and can no more hinder his designs, than an atom could stop the motion of a planet. No man ever was so absurd as to suppose that the power of the mightiest creature is superior or equal to that of the Creator, from which it is derived. Besides, whatever extent may be as-

* Rom. xi. 36.

signed to power, if there are bounds which it cannot pass, effects to which it is not adequate, it is not the highest power which our minds can conceive, and consequently the being of whom it is predicated is not God.

There are some things which to superficial thinkers may seem to be inconsistent with infinite power, and to prove that although the power of God far transcends that of the mightiest creatures, it is subject to certain limitations. Of these I shall briefly take notice, before I proceed to lay before you the evidences of this perfection which are afforded by his works.

First, God cannot work contradictions, as to make a thing to be and not to be at the same time; to make a part greater than the whole; to make what is past, present; or what is present, future. It is self-evident that such things are not the objects of power. As it is no impeachment of the perfection of the eye, that it cannot see what is invisible, or of the perfection of the ear, that it cannot hear what is not audible, so it implies no imperfection in the power of God, that it cannot do what cannot be done. The reason that God cannot work contradictions, is not that he is deficient in power, and consequently could work them if his power were greater, but that the things themselves are in their own nature impossible.

Secondly, God cannot feel pain, or be weary, or die. But surely it will not be supposed that this impossibility is inconsistent with infinitude or power. Such things are proofs of weakness in those who are subject to them. The nature, therefore, of which they cannot be predicated, is the most powerful in the universe, and possesses life and activity in the highest perfection. Passiveness cannot co-exist with absolute perfection. Exemption from every infirmity is implied in the idea of omnipotence.

Thirdly, God cannot lie, or deny himself. But this, you will observe, is not a physical, but a moral impossibility, and therefore is no limitation of omnipotence. It is not owing to the want of power to deceive his creatures, but to the incompatibility of the act with the purity and goodness of his nature. Truth is essential to him as well as power, and the exercise of power is always in conformity to truth. He is so holy, and so good, that he will not impose upon men by false representations, or excite hopes which it is not his intention to realize. We know that there is no such difficulty in the simple act of deceiving, as to require an extraordinary degree of power. It is usually the refuge of the weak, and few resort to artifice who can accomplish their purposes by direct and honourable means. No greater effort is necessary to utter a falsehood than to speak truth, and it is often easier not to perform our promises than to perform them. He who gave us our senses could render them the vehicles of fallacious perceptions, and he could pervert our mental faculties so as to lead us to the most erroneous conclusions, but he will not.

Lastly, It would be no objection against the infinite power of God, if we should discover what appeared to us imperfections in his works, if in living and inanimate substances, we should find certain parts which seemed unfinished, or useless, or not so well adapted to the end in view as we might conceive them to have been. To a modest inquirer, a doubt might occur whether he was a competent judge in such cases; and at any rate, he who considered that the hand of God made the eye and the ear, would feel no difficulty in conceiving that it was not from want of power but from design, that other parts were not executed with the same consummate skill. We observe decay and death among the works of God; and we might be led to infer, from their frail and transitory nature, that however admirably they are executed, their Maker must have wanted power to render them permanent. But, besides that this inference gratuitously assumes, that he meant to give them permanence but could not, we also observe, that although the individuals perish, the species remains; that new human beings, new animals, and new vegetables regularly come into existence; and we have a proof in their production, that decay and death are not owing to weakness, but to design or permission, because the same power which creates new beings, could have given perpetual duration to the old. Once more, moral evil has found its way into the universe, and disturbed the order which its Author had established. His laws have been violated; the exercise of his goodness to his creatures has been interrupted to a certain extent; the beauty of his works has been impaired; and disease, death, and misery, abound in the world. But no believer in revelation, or even in the doctrines of natural religion, can think that it was introduced against his will, or because he could not prevent it. There can be no doubt that he foresaw and permitted it: it would be repugnant to the idea of an all-perfect Being, to suppose that it arose unexpectedly to derange his plan, or that he attempted in vain to exclude it. Since he was pleased to make man a free agent, the possibility of the abuse of his freedom was the necessary consequence: a creature capable of acting in different ways might do wrong. God could have excluded moral evil, either by withholding liberty from man, that is, by giving him a different constitution, making him a totally different creature; or by controlling the exercise of it in such a manner as not to take it away. But he chose to make him free, and to leave him to act as his own mind should direct him. The existence of moral evil, therefore, is no evidence of a deficiency of power in the Supreme Ruler. It would be more plausible to consider it as an objection against his wisdom in forming a plan, of which evil has been the result; but here also, it would not be difficult to shew that the objection is unfounded, and originates in presumption and impiety.

To conclude this part of the subject. When we say that God is almighty, we mean, agreeably to our former definition, that he can do every thing possible, every thing consistent with the other perfections of his nature. We might say that his power is limited only by his own nature, were there not an impropriety in the expression, because his nature is infinite. Nothing can effectually oppose his power; or rather we may ask with the apostle, "Who hath resisted his will?"* It has already done much, and much it is still able to do. It could create ten thousand new worlds; it could raise up innumerable orders of beings, with an endless variety of forms and faculties. It is not exhausted or impaired by the wonders which it has already performed; for "the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary."†

I now proceed to lay before you the proofs of the power of God which his works supply. But "who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praise?"‡ "Lo," says Job, after an enumeration of some of them, "Lo! these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him! but the thunder of his power, who can understand?"‖

In the first place, The power of God was displayed in the creation of all things; by which we mean, that he produced them out of nothing, and did not form them of pre-existent matter. This was an act of Divine power beyond our conception, because it is totally different from the effects which our own power, or that of other creatures, can accomplish. We must have a subject upon which to operate. We must be furnished with materials for our work; and then, all that we can do, is to mix or join them together, to separate them, to change their position, and arrange them in a new order.

* Rom. ix. 19. † Is. xl. 28. ‡ Ps. cvi. 2. ‖ Job xxvi. 14.

We may compress or expand them, but we cannot add a single particle to the mass. Even in the operations of nature, we see nothing like a proper creation. Great transformations are constantly taking place, of the elements into vegetables, and of vegetables into animal substances; but no new matter enters into the composition. Hence it may seem impossible that something should have ever been produced out of nothing, as the power necessary for this purpose has nothing analogous in our experience and observation. The maxim, *ex nihilo nihil fit*,* was held to be indisputable by all the ancient philosophers. A few of them were atheists, maintaining the eternity of matter, and the production of all things by chance: but even the advocates of theism joined with them in the principle now mentioned, and differed only in believing, that matter was disposed in its present order by the agency of an intelligent Being. We have formerly proved that absolute eternity implies necessary and immutable existence, which it would be absurd to attribute to a substance inert, passive, divisible, subject to perpetual change, here in motion, and there at rest. But although we have never seen an act of creation, we have evidence in ourselves that it is not impossible. We know that we began to exist; that we now are, but that there was a time when we were not. Our bodies, it may be said, were made of pre-existent materials. We acknowledge the truth of the remark; and it is not to them that we appeal as an argument. The same thing cannot be said of our souls, which are not a compound, the ingredients of which were prior in time, but a pure simple essence which was produced at the moment when our bodies were animated; for the notion of their pre-existence in another state, before they were united to our bodies, is a hypothesis without a shadow of proof. "Since this thinking conscious self," it has been justly said, "a substantial being, of whose existence we have the greatest certainty, began to be not of itself, but produced by a cause, it may be to us a satisfying proof of creating power; for what greater difficulty can there be in conceiving that God made heaven and earth, than in conceiving that he made the self-conscious soul of man within him? Is matter any more real than the principle of thought and volition? and could not the power which gave existence to the one also produce the other?" This argument, indeed, will not be conclusive to those who deny the immateriality of the soul, and hold thought and volition to be the effects of organization, as musical sounds are of the strings of an instrument; but we here assume it to be a distinct substance upon the ground of reason as well as of revelation. "Any man who calmly attends to the beginning of his own personal existence, that is, of his conscious thinking, must see in it an exertion of power of which he can form no distinct idea, and which, he cannot but be convinced, is to him as inexplicable as the creation of the material world." Although creating power is to us incomprehensible, it does not follow that it is impossible. It implies no contradiction. It is no objection against it, that it exceeds the power of creatures: and all our difficulties would vanish, if we would recollect that the power of which we are speaking is infinite. No man is able to prove, that the production of something out of nothing is impossible: all that he can say is, that it is inconceivable to him how it may be done; but he can as little conceive the absolute eternity of God, which however he must admit, if he is not an atheist.

Finding, then, that matter exists since we know that it was not eternal, we must admit that it was created; or in other words, that in the beginning God exerted a power the greatest which we can conceive, a power strictly infinite; for he who could make something out of nothing, can do all possible things. The description of the work of creation in the book of Genesis is sublime, but simple. It was effected without means, without labour, by a mere act of volition. In the language of an inspired writer, God "spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."* To a mind capable of abstract reflection, it must appear that creation, whether the thing created was great or small, a universe or a world, a ball of earth or this large globe, demonstrates the omnipotence of the Maker. The evidence depends not upon the size of the object, but upon its production out of nothing; and to reason, a pile of grass will suffice as well as the solar system. There can be no doubt, that the power which could create any thing, however diminutive, could with equal ease replenish space with suns and their attendant planets. But in such a case as the present, the eye, and still more the imagination, lend their aid to strengthen the deductions of reason, and to make a deeper and livelier impression upon the mind. Let it then be considered that the Almighty fiat called into existence not only this earth, so spacious that all its regions have not yet been explored, and the sun who is a million times larger, with the planets which revolve around him as their centre, but a countless multitude of stars at an inconceivable distance from us, which probably give light to other worlds still more numerous; that thought cannot set boundaries to the universe, in which there may be luminous bodies so remote, that their light, notwithstanding the astonishing velocity with which it moves, has not yet reached us; that bodies have been discovered of such magnitude, that the sun in comparison of them dwindles into a point; that there was a time, when space, which this wonderful array fills and adorns, was a mighty void, the abode of darkness and silence; and that in a moment all arose at the voice of God. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their hosts by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth."†

Let us proceed to other manifestations of the power of God. And I remark, that it is displayed in the preservation of all things, which has been called a continual creation. The idea intended is, that as their existence is dependent, it is prolonged from moment to moment by the same power which created them at first. Some seem to speak, as if having been once made, they had the ground or reason of their being in themselves, continued without the immediate interference of their Creator, and could only cease to be by a positive act of his will. They insinuate that it would imply imperfection if they needed his constant care, and remind us of the works of man, which do not fall to pieces when the hand of the artist is withdrawn. But between the two cases there is no analogy. The works of man are not dependent upon him for their existence, but for their form; the materials of which they are composed subsist, and even the order in which they are arranged is maintained, by the laws of nature. If the motions of such of them as do move, go on after he has left them, it is not by any power which he has communicated to them, but in consequence of his previous contrivance to make some of those laws act upon them. All the honour which man can claim from his works is that of arrangement: their preservation and movements are traced to the same power which upholds the earth, and guides it in its course. It is not contrary to reason, but agreeable to its dictates, to affirm, that without the unceasing agency of the Creator, the universe would return to nothing; and the Scripture teaches the same doctrine when it says, "In him we live, and move, and have our being."‡ He alone has the reason of his existence in himself; all other beings are dependent upon him, as the stream is fed by a perpetual supply from

* From nothing, nought is produced.

* Ps. xxxiii. 9. † Isa. xl. 26. ‡ Acts xvii. 28.

the fountain. Providence, therefore, when rightly understood, gives the same display of omnipotence as creation. "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power."* The most durable of the works of man are subject to decay. The hand of time sweeps away the noblest monuments of his greatness; and towers, and palaces, and cities are laid in the dust. But the sun shines with undiminished splendour, although thousands of years have passed away since he began to give light to the world, and still rejoices as a strong man to run his race; the earth, which has supplied so many generations with food, renews its fertility every year, and displays the unabated vigour of vegetation; the various tribes of animals and vegetables are preserved, although the process of decay and destruction is going on without interruption; and the grand movements of the universe proceed with undisturbed regularity. Our world is composed of elements of mighty force, which by their occasional conflicts cause dreadful convulsions. The furious tempest levels the forests, and throws down the habitations of men; the lightning shatters the lofty monument and the magnificent palace; the earthquake lays cities in ruins, breaks rocks in pieces, and removes mountains from their place; rivers overflowing their banks spread desolation over the fields; and the sea, heaved up from its ancient bed, overwhelms the dry land with its mountainous waves. But since the beginning of time, the havock has been partial: there has been no convulsion which has affected the globe itself, or made any material change upon its surface, except the universal deluge, which was an extraordinary act of providence for the punishment of sin. We think perhaps, that we can satisfactorily account for the constancy of the course of nature, notwithstanding these occasional deviations. We can tell, for example, why the ocean is not driven upon the land by the hurricanes which agitate its waters, or by the rapid motion of the globe around its axis. But what is the law of gravitation which holds it in its place? Who established that law, and who maintains it? What can any man conceive it to be but the power of God exerted in a regular manner for a specific purpose? Who that sees the billows sinking as they approach the shore and retiring, will not admire the punctuality with which they obey the will of their Maker? "Who shut up the sea with doors when it broke forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? who brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?"† When we reflect upon the movements which are going on among the celestial bodies, how stupendous is the power by which they are conducted! The moon is driving through the heavens at the rate of more than two thousand miles in an hour: the earth, although apparently quiescent, is flying at the rate of fifty or sixty thousand; and the velocity of the comets is so great as to terrify and overwhelm the imagination; yet no confusion takes place, no mischief happens. None of these bodies is shivered into pieces by the velocity of its flight; none of them is dashed upon another; none of them makes the slightest deviation from the path marked out to it in the immensity of space. We can calculate with the utmost confidence upon their return at a fixed period to a particular spot. They are sustained and guided by the hand of Omnipotence. We say that matter is inert, that if at rest it will continue at rest, and if in motion it will continue in motion, unless its state be changed by an external cause. But do we imagine that we have thus explained the phenomena of the universe? Alas! we have merely stated a fact, but we have not accounted for it, by calling it a law of nature. Why does a body continue in motion? It is not owing to its own activity, but to the energy of the Creator's will. This gave the first impulse, and this holds on its course for ages. His power at once binds the planets as with a chain to the centre, and propels them in their perpetual career around it. "O Lord God of Hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand."*

Let us, in the next place, consider his moral government of the world. Under this division of the subject, the evidence may not appear so striking, because it is not addressed to the senses, but relates to the invisible influence exerted upon the thoughts and volitions of intelligent creatures. Yet to a reflecting mind it will be equally convincing. Wonderful are the displays of divine power in the creation and preservation of the material system; but we know that there it meets with no opposition, whereas here, resistance is to be subdued, determinate purposes and wayward passions are to be controlled, and rendered subservient to the counsels of the Almighty. We learn from revelation, that there are spiritual beings in the universe, of strength superior to ours, of great activity, cunning, and malignity, who being in a state of hostility to their Maker, are also enemies to man, and take delight in disorder, misery and ruin. What havock they would make, if full scope were given to their inclinations, we may conjecture from what they have actually done, under Divine permission, by introducing sin into our world, with the dismal train of natural and moral evils which have closely followed it. Would they not blast the fair scenes of nature, and convert the earth into another hell, the abode of fear, and pain, and despair? The human heart is the seat of many violent and malevolent passions, which finding a favourable opportunity, break out into murder, treachery, injustice, oppression, and all the crimes by which public and private peace is disturbed. The occasional eruptions which take place under the most vigilant government, admonish us that we are walking above smothered fire; and we shudder at the thought of the scenes of horror which would be exhibited, if all restraints were removed. What would be our condition, if wicked men and malignant spirits were let loose upon us? The earth would no longer be a safe habitation. Could the human race long subsist, amidst the furious workings of pride, revenge, avarice, and cruelty, and the additional calamities which the malice of their invisible foes would inflict? We are preserved then by the power of God, who holds men and devils in chains; and the excesses which he sometimes permits, should remind us how much we are indebted to his providence, to which alone it is owing that we are not consumed. Of the influence by which unholy beings are withheld from their purposes, or are prevented from adopting measures congenial to their depraved dispositions, they are often insensible; and at other times they are hindered by obstacles which second causes have placed in their way; but every circumstance is ordered by a higher hand. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."† We perceive also proofs of the power of God in the overthrow of states and nations, which shews that he rules in the kingdoms of men; in the extraordinary success and elevation of individuals, in the face of untoward circumstances, and of opposition which was more than sufficient to have crushed them; in the feeble means by which great designs are sometimes accomplished, and the inadequate causes by which schemes well concerted and vigorously supported are defeated; in the unaccountable courage with which men are inspired at one time, and the equally unaccountable fear which seizes upon them at another; in the sudden failure of their wisdom, as if they had been infatuated by some mysterious influence; in the sudden

* Heb. i. 3. † Job xxxviii. 8, 10, 11.

* Psalm lxxxix. 8, 13. † Ps. lxxvi. 10.

change of their counsels, for which they are not themselves able to assign a satisfactory reason; and in many other instances which proclaim that there is an invisible power which disposes of human affairs according to its pleasure, and turns the hearts of men as the rivers of water. They establish the fact of a supreme dominion in nature, from which no creature is exempt, and to the designs of which living and inanimate beings are subservient. There is no counsel or might against the Lord. He who boasts of his independence, cannot move his tongue without permission; he who dares to say, "Who is the Almighty, that I should serve him?" is compelled to execute his orders; he who sets himself to oppose the designs of Heaven, is sometimes the person whom Heaven has chosen to fulfil them. "His kingdom ruleth over all."

The power of God has been displayed in the work of redemption. It is frequently described as a new creation, to signify that in the recovery of mankind from guilt there is a glorious display of omnipotence, as well as in the original production of the heavens and the earth.

The power of God was manifested in the conception of our Saviour, whose mother was a virgin, in the mighty works which he performed, and in his resurrection from the dead. These are all represented as manifestations of this attribute. It may be remarked, however, from a regard to accuracy of ideas, that strictly there was no greater power exerted in his conception, than in that of any other man according to the established law of generation; and in his miracles, than in the ordinary operations of nature. The power was not greater, but the display of it was more sensible and impressive. It is a false idea of miracles, that they are more difficult than other works. It is equally easy to God to act in opposition to the laws of nature or according to them; just as it is as easy to a man to walk in a by-path as on the highway, the same muscular strength being sufficient in both cases. There is no difference between a miracle and another event, but that the one is unusual and the other is common; in the one, second causes are excluded, in the other, they are admitted. But in a miracle, the power of God is more distinctly seen, and excites greater attention. When a child was born without a father, when a body which had been deposited in a sepulchre was restored to life, when, at the command of a man, the blind received sight, the lame walked, and lepers were cleansed, nothing but the obstinacy of prejudice could have hindered any person from recognizing the finger of God.

The power of God was manifested in sustaining our Saviour in his dreadful sufferings; I mean not those of his body only, but also his mental agony, which would have overwhelmed the firmest mind, having only its own fortitude to support it. To this cause he ascribes the patience with which he endured them: "The Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."* He said to his disciples, "Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."†

The power of God is displayed in the conversion of sinners. When we consider the change effected at the return of a sinner to God after a long apostasy, and the opposition which is made to it by the most active principles of his nature; the influence upon his mind, by which it admits views totally new, and the revolution which takes place in his feelings and affections; the sacrifices which he makes, the connexions which he abandons, the conditions to which he submits, and the new course of life upon which he enters; in a word, the entire alteration in the moral habit of his soul, we must be convinced that a higher cause was requisite than reasoning and eloquence, and that nothing less than Omnipotence could have made "old things pass away, and all things become new." Hence the conversion of a sinner is called in Scripture a creation, and a resurrection from the dead; and God is said to fulfil in them "all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power."*

What I would chiefly request you to consider, is the power of God manifested in the propagation of the Gospel, which will appear truly worthy of admiration, if we reflect upon the nature of the religion published to the world, the obstacles which stood in the way of its progress, and the persons by whose ministry the opposition was subdued. The religion was the least likely to succeed by its intrinsic merits of all that have been proposed to mankind; not because it wanted high excellence, but because it was not of a kind to be generally perceived and relished. It is pronounced by one of the apostles to have been a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks.† It offered to both salvation by a man who had been crucified; salvation, not from poverty, oppression, and disease, but from sin, which men loved too well to have any desire to be delivered from it; it demanded the renunciation of their present habits and pursuits, the sacrifice of worldly honours and pleasures, and conditionally of life itself; it prescribed humility, the mortification of appetite, and a course of circumspect and patient obedience; and the promised recompense lay in another world, of which they could have no knowledge but by implicitly depending upon the word of its Author. To whom was this religion addressed? To the Jews, who had conceived a very different idea of the character of the Messiah, and expected him not to die but to reign, and to call them, not to repentance but to victory and glory; to the Gentiles, whose minds were preoccupied by the speculations of philosophical wisdom, and were prejudiced against the lowly doctrine of the cross by the pride of virtue; to men sunk in ignorance and vice, who were devoted to the worship of false gods, and felt no interest in any concerns but those of this transitory life. When Christianity demanded their attention, and claimed to be received as the only true religion, nothing could exceed their surprise and indignation. The philosophers despised it as an absurd and arrogant superstition; the priests denounced it as impious and offensive to the gods; statesmen regarded it with a jealous eye, as dangerous to the public peace; and the rabble rose against its preachers, loaded them with abuse, and subjected them to every kind of injurious treatment. To whose care was the propagation of the Gospel committed? Who were appointed to publish it amidst hardships, sufferings, and death, and to defend it against acute and learned antagonists? They were taken from the lowest ranks, and from the meanest occupations; they had not received the advantages of education, and knew nothing of worldly wisdom; they had no power, or wealth, or influence; their appearance, their language, their manner of address, were all unfavourable to their cause. Notwithstanding the utter improbability that such a religion should succeed in such circumstances, its progress was great and rapid. During the life of its first preachers, it found its way into the provinces and cities of the Roman empire, and made converts of the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate. It afterwards went on extending its conquests till it gained the ascendant, and was triumphantly established in almost every region of the civilized world. Now, as the human means employed in the propagation of the Gospel were manifestly inadequate, we must attribute its success to supernatural agency.

* Isaiah i. 7. † John xvi. 32.

* 2 Thess. i. 11. † 1 Cor. i. 23.

It is a species of miracle which does not strike the eye, but the mind. Something has been effected, not indeed without means, but above them; and is as truly wonderful as was the flowing of water from a rock, when Moses smote it with his rod. A power was exerted upon the minds of men, as plainly omnipotent as the power exerted in the creation, or in the various modifications of matter. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence."* The same writer says in another place, "We have this treasure," namely, the Gospel, "in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us;"† that is, the dispensation of it is committed to us, who are manifestly incapable of giving it efficacy, that the world may be compelled to acknowledge its success to be the work of God.

An almighty Being demands the profound reverence of his creatures. Shall they not fear him "who removeth the mountains, and they know not; who overturneth them in his anger; who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble; who commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars; who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea; who doth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number?"‡ His friendship should be diligently cultivated, for if God be for us, who can be against us? Upon him we should confidently rely, who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is, who keepeth truth for ever."‖ "The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night."§

LECTURE XXIV.

ON GOD.

Goodness of God—Idea of this Perfection: display of Goodness in the Creation of the Universe: and in his dispensations to Mankind—Existence of Physical Evil consistent with the Divine Goodness—Origin of Moral Evil—Display of Divine Goodness in Redemption.

By the goodness of God, we do not understand the general excellence of his nature, but that particular property or principle, which disposes him to communicate happiness to his creatures. It is in this sense that we pronounce it to be one of his essential attributes. It is necessary in conjunction with other attributes, to complete the idea of an all-perfect Being, and is the foundation of the trust, and love, and hope, with which he is regarded by men. We could think of him only with distant reverence, if we conceived that he took no interest in the well-being of his creatures; and the supposition that he was actuated by a principle of malevolence, would create dread of one infinitely superior to us, from whose pursuit it was impossible to escape. We should tremble at his power, which could torment and destroy us; at his wisdom, the contrivances of which for our injury we possessed no means of evading; at his immensity, which forced upon us the alarming thought, that to whatever place we might flee for refuge, we should always be in the presence of an enemy. Goodness throws a mild and tranquillizing lustre over the majestic attributes of his nature. It presents them to us under a friendly aspect; associated with it, they appear as so many powers, by which its benignant designs will be carried into full effect. We look up to him not only as a Sovereign, but as a Father; we feel emotions of gratitude rising in harmony with sentiments of veneration; we are emboldened to supplicate his favour, and to resign ourselves to his disposal. Goodness has been considered as one of his attributes by men of every nation, conducted no doubt to this conclusion by the proofs of his beneficence in the natural course of events. The ancient heathens called him the Best, as well as the Greatest of Beings. If some believed in the existence of a malevolent Being, because they observed much evil in the world, and knew not how otherwise to account for it, they also acknowledged another Being of an opposite character, the author of order and beauty, by whose bounty the wants of living creatures were supplied.

Goodness being a disposition to communicate happiness, regulated, however, in an intelligent Agent by wisdom, and in a moral Agent by a regard to purity and justice, we learn that it belongs to God from a survey of his works and dispensations.

The goodness of God is clearly deducible from the act of creation. We can conceive no other reason, in subordination to his glory, for the exertion of his power in giving life to so many orders of creatures, and fitting up the earth to be a convenient habitation for them. This argument consists of two parts: the formation of sensitive beings capable of happiness, and the adaptation of the circumstances in which they are placed to promote it. The production of the earth, with its division into sea and dry land, its vegetable covering, and its springs and rivers, would have afforded a proof of power, but not of goodness, if it had not been replenished with inhabitants who could be benefited by this arrangement; so that in reasoning concerning the goodness of God, we constantly refer to the provision made for the well-being of animals, rational and irrational, according to their respective natures and capacities. He did not create by a necessity of nature, as the sun gives light, or a fountain pours out its waters; but, being a free Agent, he exerted his power in consequence of counsel and design, and exerted it to such an extent, and in such a variety of ways, as were agreeable to himself. He did not create with the same view which leads a man to collect a retinue of friends and dependants, that he may be cheered by their company, and aided by their services: for he was sufficient to himself, infinitely and immutably blessed in the enjoyment of his own excellence. As we are confessedly not competent judges of the Divine counsels, it might be presumptuous to affirm that benevolence was the only motive of the creation, and it has been thought more proper to say, that the end was the glory of the Creator. But this is a general reason for all his works, and consequently throws no light upon a particular one. When we say that God does any thing for his glory, if we affix any distinct sense to our words, we must mean that he does it for the manifestation of his perfections. There is no inconsistency, therefore, in maintaining that goodness was the motive of creation, for this is only to say, that God purposed to display the benevolence of his nature in giving existence to other beings besides himself. It is true, that creation has eventually served to glorify all his perfections in the great scheme of providence, of which fallen men are the objects; but considering it by itself, and in its first intention, we are authorized to assert, that its primary design was the diffusion of happiness. What other idea is suggested by the contemplation of a system so regular and beautiful in all its parts, and teeming with life and enjoyment? Had not the Divine nature been communica-

* 1 Cor. i. 27—29. † 2 Cor. iv. 7. ‡ Job ix. 5—10.
‖ Ps. cxlvi. 5, 6. § Ps. cxxi. 5, 6.

tive, God would have remained for ever alone; but now he beholds from his throne a scale of beings, ascending from the insect and the worm to the seraph and the archangel, all rejoicing in conscious existence, and partaking of the riches of his liberality. The eternal fountain has overflowed, and the universe is refreshed and gladdened by its stream. It is the saying of a heathen philosopher, that when God was about to make the world, he transformed himself into love.

The goodness of God may be inferred from the state in which living creatures are made. They are relatively perfect: that is, they are fitted for their place in creation, their peculiar mode of life, and the purposes which they were designed to serve. Nothing is wanting which is necessary for the preservation of life, for defence, the procuring of food, and motion from place to place. As this adaptation is a proof of wisdom, when considered in the relation of means to an end, so it is also a proof of goodness, as the obvious intention of it is the well-being of the animal. Had we found living creatures destitute of any of those members and organs of sense upon which their safety and comfort depend, birds without wings, fishes without fins, beasts without legs, we might have supposed that they were the productions of a Being who meant that they should languish in misery and perish. The contrary conclusion must be drawn from the intention which has been evidently paid to their comfortable subsistence. He who has bestowed life, has rendered it a gift worthy of himself, by associating with it a variety of conveniences and pleasures. "If he had wished our misery," says a celebrated writer, "he might have made sure of his purpose, by forming our senses to be so many sores and pains to us, as they are now instruments of gratification and enjoyment, or by placing us amidst objects so ill suited to our perceptions, as to have continually offended us, instead of ministering to our refreshment and delight. He might have made, for example, every thing we tasted bitter, every thing we saw loathsome, every thing we touched a sting, every smell a stench, and every sound a discord. If he had been indifferent about our happiness or misery, we must impute to our good fortune (as all design by this supposition is excluded) both the capacity of our senses to receive pleasure, and the supply of external objects fitted to produce it. But either of these (and still more both of them) being too much to be attributed to accident, nothing remains but the supposition that God, when he created the human species, wished their happiness, and made for them the provision which he has made, with that view, and for that purpose."* These observations are applicable to the inferior animals as well as to men; and the adjustment of their constitution to their circumstances, so that they are capable of enjoyment from the objects around them, proves in the most satisfactory manner, that their Maker is a benevolent Being.

The goodness of God is displayed in the abundant provision which he has made for the wants of his creatures. "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."† With the care and bounty of a parent, he provides for the members of his family. The various species of animals differ from each other, as much in their taste as in their form, insomuch, that the food which sustains one will not nourish another, and what one eagerly seeks another rejects with disgust. Substances which to us seem useless, and offensive to our senses, and if taken into our stomachs would be noxious, furnish wholesome and delicious nutriment to creatures differently constituted. The goodness of God is seen in the production of such a variety of substances, that none of the tribes of animals which it has seemed meet to his wisdom to create, might want its appropriate aliment. The guests at the table of providence have no community of interests and feelings, but they all find entertainment; not one of them goes away disappointed. Many parts of the earth are not inhabited by men, yet in them the process of vegetation goes on from year to year; the sun shines, the rain falls, and the earth brings forth herbs and plants. It is not, however, to be thought that this is a mere waste, like the profusion of the spendthrift, who scatters his bounty where no good will be done. In the deserts there are myriads of insects, and birds, and quadrupeds, which He who made them does not deem unworthy of his care; and as our Lord says, "our heavenly Father feedeth them." If on digging into the earth, or penetrating into the fissures of the rock, you find living creatures to which such places afford a convenient abode, you also find, that he who assigned them these stations has not left them without the means of subsistence and enjoyment. What a delightful view of the Divine goodness is given by the regular succession of the seasons, the opening buds and blossoms of spring, the luxuriant growth of summer, the matured fruits and rich harvests of autumn! It is by this succession, that God prepares the ample and various feasts to which all his living offspring are invited. For them the sun pours out a flood of light and genial heat; for them the earth is endowed with unceasing powers of fertility; for them the winds bear life and health on their wings. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches." His riches are not exhausted upon the earth; the ocean which surrounds it is also replenished with inhabitants, to whom his bounty extends. "So also is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good."*

Once more: The goodness of God is manifest in the variety of natural pleasures, which he has provided for his creatures. By associating these with existence, he has made it truly a blessing, and acted in the character of benevolence, which happy itself, delights to see others happy. There seems, indeed, to be a high degree of pleasure attached to simple existence, as we may judge from the lively motions of young animals—the frisking of a lamb, for example—which appear to have no specific object, and to proceed from a certain indescribable satisfaction which they experience in the possession of life and activity. When in summer the air is filled with myriads of insects, which are almost constantly on the wing, wheeling in sportive circles, we have an evidence of the delight with which they pass their transitory duration, and a proof, not perhaps much attended to, but calculated to affect a reflecting mind, of the beneficence of the Deity. Their enjoyment is merely sensitive, but it is the only kind of which they are capable; and it is goodness, rich in its treasures, and minute in its attentions, which thus adapts itself to every living nature. His goodness is farther displayed in the pleasure which animals derive from their food. This is a distinct consideration from the nourishment which it yields. It might have nourished without producing any agreeable sensation. We experience that food not only satisfies the appetite of hunger, but also gratifies our taste; and we have reason to think, that this gratification is enjoyed by the inferior animals, in an equal or a superior degree. Now this pleasure is not at all necessary to the great design of food, the sustenance of the body; the substances which we use might have been as tasteless as water, without any diminution of their nutritive quality; the taste is super-

* Paley's Moral Philosophy, B. ii. c. 5. † Ps. cxlv. 15, 16.

* Ps. civ. 24—28.

added by our Maker to render our food pleasant as well as useful, and clearly shews attention to our animal comfort. We may draw the same conclusion from the means which he has provided for gratifying our other senses of sight, smell, and hearing. The earth might have been as fertile as it is, although its surface had not been so delightfully variegated, and its productions had not been moulded into such elegant forms. We might have lived, although there had been no blossoms and flowers painted with the most beautiful colours, and exhaling sweet perfumes. We might have walked in the fields and woods, imbibing health and spirits from the pure atmosphere, although our ears had not been saluted with the music of birds, and other pleasing sounds. Whence this loveliness, this charm diffused over the face of nature? Whence those graces so profusely scattered around us, those agreeable accompaniments of natural objects, which do not render them more useful, but more attractive: which do not sustain life, but impart a higher relish to it? Surely we may say, that "the tender mercies of the Lord are over all his works;" that there are every where indications of a studious attention to the happiness of his creatures; that having designed this world for our habitation, he has furnished it with all conveniences and ornaments, to remind us how good he is, and how well entitled to our grateful homage.

What has been said chiefly relates to the lower animals, but has been mixed up with some observations illustrative of the Divine goodness to man. There are some things, however, which may seem to lead to the opposite conclusion, as the prevalence of disease and death among them, and particularly the fact, that some of them prey upon others. No man, I presume, will plead for the gift of immortality to the inferior creatures, and maintain that God cannot be good in bestowing a happy life, unless he prolong it for ever. Were not their numbers thinned by death, the earth would be overstocked, and leave no room for human inhabitants; and they themselves would perish for want of subsistence, or in the furious conflicts to which the scarcity of food would give rise. If for wise reasons they are doomed to die, disease naturally results from this appointment, as the means of effecting dissolution, and cannot be objected to but on such grounds as might be alleged against their mortality itself. It is part of the system, the unavoidable attendant of a body liable to decay and destruction. It is observable, that health is the rule, and disease is the exception, and that in the whole life of the animal, such is the overbalance of good as to make the evil almost disappear. Some animals prey upon others. But, not to mention that this could have been prevented only by not creating carnivorous animals, and that we are too imperfectly acquainted with the reasons of things, to pronounce that they might have been wanted without any injury to the system; I remark, that if animals were to die, this mode of terminating their life is not more inconsistent with goodness, than death by disease or by old age. The pain is not greater, and in many cases is less; and we mistake if we think that the fear of it disquiets their lives. Even men in countries abounding with ferocious animals, do not pass their time in continual apprehension, but grow familiar with danger; and still feebler is the impression upon irrational creatures, who have no forethought, and seem not to feel fear till danger is apparent. I do not say that these observations are a full solution of the difficulty; but if the facts on which the objection is founded, be considered as forming a small deduction from the sum total of goodness in this part of creation, attention to the other facts which have been mentioned, will leave no doubt in our minds, that this world is the work of a benevolent Being.

I now proceed to bring proofs of the goodness of God, exclusively from his dispensations to man. And here it will be necessary to turn our eyes from the present scene, although it exhibits many tokens of Divine benignity as we have partly seen, and to contemplate, by the light of revelation, the state in which man was originally placed. Although he was last created, yet he was not least. A high rank was assigned to him in the scale of being: "God gave him more understanding than the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air." He not only endowed him with reason, which is so much superior to instinct, but he communicated to him the most excellent wisdom, consisting in the knowledge of himself and his Maker, the relations subsisting between them, the whole extent of his duty, the true nature of happiness, and the hopes which he was authorized to entertain as a being made for immortality. His goodness was manifested in the moral or spiritual powers with which man was furnished, in the innate rectitude of his dispositions, his love of holiness, his desire for the chief good, and his supreme delight in it; in consequence of which he was capable of enjoying felicity, incomparably superior in kind and degree to that of the inferior creatures, and did actually enjoy it under the smile of his Maker. It appeared in the dominion with which he was invested; a dominion which imparted not only pre-eminence, but authority and power, so that the other creatures were subject to him, and might be used for his good according to the will of the Universal Parent. "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Thus he was constituted lord of this lower world, and of all its riches; and it might be said, that as man was made for God, so the earth was made for man; every thing in it being placed at his disposal, and being intended to minister to him. Again, the goodness of God appeared in the covenant which he made with man, promising to reward his obedience with everlasting felicity. To such a recompense his obedience could not have entitled him independently of this stipulation. Obedience was a debt which he owed to his Creator, to whose service he was bound to devote the faculties which he had received from his bounty: so that, although he had fulfilled the whole law, he should have done only what it was his duty to do, and should have had no claim to a remuneration. This transaction, therefore, displayed great condescension, and also great benevolence, a regard to the happiness of man, which it would have probably augmented, and certainly could have rendered immutably secure; for when the term of trial was past, the Divine faithfulness and justice would have been pledged for its perpetual duration. It was the love of a father holding out to his son the highest reward which he could confer, for doing what he was previously under the most sacred obligations to perform. Through his folly, man lost the noble prize set before him; but the event does not in any degree obscure the evidence of the benignity from which the offer of it proceeded; and at this distance, we ought to look back with grateful emotions upon the hope which animated our great progenitor in the commencement of his career, and the blessedness which might have descended as an inheritance to his children. The original state of man was a state of happiness. Peace and joy then reigned in his bosom, and a bright interminable prospect rose to his view. Eternal nature was in harmony with his feelings, and shone with the glory of his Maker. In paradise, which the hand of God had prepared for him, all was beauty, and melody, and delight. This was the golden age of which poets have sung, when there was perpetual spring, the gentle breezes fanned the spontaneous flowers, the unploughed earth yielded its delicious fruits, the rivers flowed

with milk and nectar, and honey distilled from the oak. But, as poets also tell, a new order of things succeeded, with a change of seasons, frost and burning heat, and stubborn soil, from which man gained his subsistence by painful exertion.* Yet even in this new state, which we know from Scripture to have been superinduced by sin, there are not wanting many proofs of the goodness of God.

When man transgressed the law of his Creator, a dispensation of unmixed wrath might have commenced. He had forfeited any claim to the blessings of life. Having been expelled from paradise, the abode of innocence and peace, he had no right to expect elsewhere a comfortable habitation, and might have found every region blasted by the curse which had been pronounced upon the earth for his sake. God, who for wise reasons had suspended the infliction of the threatened penalty and permitted him to live, might have doomed him and his posterity to a life of misery. When he condemned him to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow, he might have appointed his labour to be still more oppressive. He might have impressed upon every object the signatures of his displeasure, to call up at every step the remembrance of our guilt, and to keep us constantly in fearful apprehension of the day of vengeance and recompense. The earth might have continued to yield its various productions, but these might have been so changed as to afford no pleasure to our senses. Our situation might have resembled that of a criminal shut up in a gloomy dungeon till the day of execution, counting with sorrow the hours as they pass, and unvisited by a single ray of consolation. There might have been no intervals of ease, no sensations of joy; horror might have surrounded us in terrific forms, and the presence of our fellow-men might have added to our torment. How different is the earth, smiling under the influences of heaven, teeming with abundance, and furnishing from its surface and its bowels the materials of varied enjoyments! The proofs of the Divine goodness formerly adduced, become more striking and impressive, when it is considered, that the place in which they are displayed is a rebellious world: that the objects of this beneficence are sinful creatures, who never suffer a single day to pass without offending their Benefactor, and many of whom seem to have forgotten that he exists, except when they introduce his name to blaspheme it, and make no other use of his bounty but to outrage his laws, and plunge themselves deeper and deeper in depravity. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."†

From this view of the present state of men, it is easy to account for some facts which appear to be inconsistent with the goodness of God, and have much perplexed those who are ignorant of revelation, or did not choose to be assisted by its light in their inquiries. From the existence of evil in creation, some have inferred the existence of a malignant being, who is continually employed in counteracting the designs of the principle of good: but this exploded doctrine has been already considered, and need not retard us in our progress. Men are subject to pain, disease and death. Care and toil are necessary to procure a subsistence, and they not unfrequently prove abortive, from causes over which human power has no control. We experience inclement seasons, and dreadful havock is made by tempests, earthquakes, and inundations. Such is the diversity of climate, that in one region intense cold prevails, and in another excessive heat, so that both are rendered unfit for the habitation of man. Some countries are barren, others are possessed by ferocious beasts and venomous reptiles. Here swarms of insects devour the fruits of the field; and there they so sting and torment the inhabitants, that they are compelled to abandon them, or spend their life in a state of continual discomfort.

The proper mode of answering this objection, is not to attempt to shew, that some of these are not evils, that others admit of alleviation, and that upon the whole they are conducive to good. It would not be difficult to prove, that there are evils to which none of these suppositions is applicable. To tell us that venomous creatures are useful, because they extract poison from the earth in which it is lodged, is to trifle with us, by substituting a childish fancy for fact. To say that pain is useful, because it admonishes us of danger and excites us to take precautions against it, is to state what in many cases is true, but is not a satisfactory answer, because it may be replied, that benevolence might have adopted a different method, and we can have no idea that pain would have been necessary for this purpose in a state of innocence. The amount is, that pain is an evil, but is overbalanced by the good of which it is productive. But we are at present inquiring, why there is any evil at all? To insinuate that it is the effect of general laws, is to throw out a reflection upon the wisdom and the power of the Creator, as if he could not have established a system of laws which would not have thwarted and crossed one another. It is something like the solution of the ancient philosophers, who ascribed the existence of evil to the malignity or the stubbornness of matter. If evil was unavoidable, God is not omnipotent; if it might have been avoided, it is not enough to say that it is subservient to good, because we feel as much difficulty as ever to reconcile the admission of it with the idea of perfect benevolence. Those who attend to the true state of the case, will reason in a different manner. Acknowledging that there are real evils, they will contend that their existence is not inconsistent with the benevolence of the Author of nature, because the world in which they are found is inhabited by sinful beings. Had man continued in his original state, these evils would have been unaccountable; but no person who believes that God is just, can wonder that suffering should be the attendant of guilt. The character of God is moral, that is, he is holy as well as benevolent; and his goodness ought to be considered, not as a disposition to confer happiness indiscriminately, but to confer it upon the proper objects. It is a mixed dispensation under which we are placed, a dispensation of mercy and of judgment. While God exercises much patience and long-suffering towards men, he gives also tokens of his displeasure; and the true ground of surprise is, not that there is a portion of evil in their lot, but that there is so much good, because they deserve the one, but are altogether unworthy of the other.

With all the evils which belong to our condition, there can be no doubt that the balance of physical good greatly preponderates. The amount will be estimated in different ways, according to the temperament of different individuals. The cheerful man gives the colour of his own feelings to the surrounding scene, and all nature smiles to his eye; but to the melancholy man, it appears enveloped as in a dark shade. Judging soberly, and admitting all necessary deductions, we cannot but acknowledge that there is more happiness than misery. In general, the days of health are many, and those of pain and sickness are few. Our sorrows admit of much alleviation, and although keenly felt at the time, grow weaker and weaker, and at last cease to disquiet us. Enjoyment of one kind or other is within the reach of all; and even in conditions which seem the most unfavorable to it, there are sources of satisfaction of which others are not aware, as we see from the contentment, the cheerful looks, and the lively conversation of those who are placed in them. There is a pliability in the human mind, which adapts itself to circumstances, and

* Ovid. Metamorph. lib. i. fab. 2, 3. † Matth. v. 45.

makes the most of them, so that the poor have their pleasure as well as the rich, the labouring classes as well as those who are living at ease. All esteem existence a blessing, and suicide is committed only when the mind is diseased, or the instinctive love of life is overcome by the extremity of pain, or the dread of approaching intolerable evil. The state even of fallen man bears ample testimony to the goodness of his Maker. It is, upon the whole, a happy world in which we live, although it is a world of sinners. God displays before our eyes the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long suffering.

Physical evil is the consequence of moral evil. On this ground, God is justified in inflicting it, and its existence is not inconsistent with his goodness. But here a more formidable difficulty presents itself. Whence comes moral evil? How has it found a place among the works of God? and is the admission of it reconcileable to his goodness? Moral evil is the consequence of the abuse of moral liberty: if there had been no creatures endowed with free agency, its name would have been unknown. The question then is, whether it was consistent with his goodness to create free agents? and since it must be answered in the affirmative, because he has actually created them, it follows that they alone are responsible for the consequences. If they have used the power which he gave them for evil and not for good, which was the original design of it: if instead of employing this power to secure their own happiness as he commanded them, they have perverted it so as to subject themselves to suffering, no blame is imputable to him. He has done nothing which can impeach the benevolence of his nature. It is not the fault of a man, that the objects of his beneficence do injury to themselves by his gifts, which would have been of advantage to them, if they had applied them to the purpose which he intended. But if moral evil would be productive of disorder and misery, would it not have been suitable to the character of a benevolent Being to have prevented it, as it was undoubtedly foreseen? In answer to this question, I will not say with some, that God could not have prevented it without destroying liberty and changing the nature of man; for the contrary is manifest from the state of the righteous in the world to come, who will be free, but no longer liable to sin. It has been asked, "whether, upon the narrow view which we have of the works of God, and the whole system of the universe, we can pretend to judge that the present constitution, in this branch of it which relates to free agents, is inconsistent with the wisdom and moral perfections of the Supreme Being? Shall we take upon us to say that the order of the creation, and the ends for which it was made, did not require that there should be such a rank of beings in it, constituted as we are, with understanding, liberty, and moral affections, but capable of sin, tempted to it, and thereby in danger of becoming unhappy through their own fault?" This may be called an appeal to our ignorance; but there is no occasion on which it may be made with greater propriety, than when we are inquiring into a fact in the Divine administration, the effects and consequences of which will last through an eternal duration, and may extend directly or indirectly to other worlds besides our own. In such a case, we may well acknowledge that the reasons of it are unknown to us, and it is better to avoid attempting to explain the permission of moral evil, than to give such an account of it as would represent the Maker of all in the light of an arbitrary Sovereign, who has sacrificed the happiness of a portion of his creatures to his own glory, or to give such an account as would impeach his justice and his goodness. Ignorant then, as we are, of the reason why moral evil was permitted, we cannot reasonably oppose the fact of its entrance into the world to the manifold proofs of the benevolence of the Deity. Let us rest upon what we know and feel, instead of perplexing ourselves with what we do not understand. It will, in the mean time, afford some relief to reflect that his wisdom has over-ruled it for the best and noblest ends, although we must beware of attributing to him what is so severely reprobated in man, the principle of doing evil that good may come. But good has come out of evil, the highest glory to God, and the highest happiness to man; and the brightest display of the Divine benevolence, is given in the plan from which such consequences have resulted.

The remaining part of this lecture will be devoted to some remarks upon the goodness of God in redemption. As manifested in this work, it is expressed by the terms, love, grace, and mercy, which exhibit it under different aspects. Love is the same with benevolence or good will, a desire for the happiness of others giving rise to the use of due means for accomplishing it. Mercy presupposes sufferings, and is goodness exercised in relieving the miserable. Grace denotes its freeness, and represents its objects as guilty beings, who were utterly unworthy of it. It is also called the philanthropy of God, because he has passed by angels, and extended his favour to man.

Redemption originated in the goodness of God, as well as creation. If we cannot conceive any reason why he formed man at first, but a disposition to communicate life and happiness, we are led, *a fortiori*, to attribute to the same cause his interposition to save him from a state of misery. Man was not necessary to his Maker, who had existed alone from eternity. He could derive no benefit from his services, and the loss of our whole race could have been immediately supplied by the production of another. His purpose respecting him was antecedent to his fall and to his creation, for it was foreseen from eternity what use he would make of his liberty; and that the purpose was perfectly free, a spontaneous act of benevolence, is evident, because it was founded on the knowledge that he would so act as to subject himself to the curse. The permission of moral evil does not imply an approbation of it. The evils which it brings upon man in the present life are a testimony of the Supreme Ruler against it; and when we turn to his word, we find him speaking of it in terms of the utmost abhorrence. We must take into the account its contrariety not only to his will but to his nature, his infinite hatred of it, the just resentment which he must have felt at the insult of his authority implied in it, and the disorder which it had caused among his works, before we can form a due estimate of the goodness which prompted him to resolve upon the deliverance of the perpetrators of an evil of such magnitude, and upon their deliverance by such wonderful means. Misery, we are authorized to believe, excites his compassion; and this fact is a decisive proof of the inconceivable benevolence of his nature, since it is certain, that he sees no misery in our world, which men do not most justly suffer, no misery which they have not incurred by their own voluntary forfeiture of his favour. Perhaps, our admiration of his goodness is lessened by the thought, that being his own creatures they had some sort of claim upon his compassion, or that it was beneath his majesty to pursue with relentless vengeance such insignificant offenders. This is undoubtedly the meaning of the language which we often hear, that he is too merciful to mark every thing amiss in the conduct of frail and erring mortals. But, if men were condemned by a just sentence, the notion of any obligation to relieve them must be given up; and whatever art may be used to alleviate their guilt, and to reduce it to a venial infirmity, their crimes, as estimated by his law, assume a different character, are acts of treason against his government, attempts to establish an independent dominion by which creatures shall rule, and their will shall be

the law. The redemption of the human race redounds to the glory of God, which is the ultimate end of it as of all his works; but this view does not obscure the evidence of the disinterestedness of his love. It is necessary that if God act, he should act in such a manner as is worthy of his infinite perfections; but he does not act from necessity, but in consequence of the sovereign determination of his will. He chooses this manner of manifesting his glory, and in the present case, might have displayed the severity of his justice, instead of the riches of his grace. The former method was preferred in his treatment of apostate angels. Men might have been involved in the same condemnation; or if it be supposed, that it became him to manifest his pardoning goodness in some region of the universe, salvation might have visited their dark abode, and the earth might have been left under the curse. The reasons of this distinction are unknown; but in his conduct towards us, he has shewn that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. It is a grateful spectacle to him, to see his creatures rejoicing in his love; and it is to love alone, to unsolicited and generous love, that we must attribute the last and best of his works, the redemption of a perishing world.

The means by which it was accomplished serve to demonstrate, how agreeable to him is the happiness of his creatures, and how earnestly he desires it. Could a word have saved us from perdition, it would have been highly benevolent to pronounce it, as it was a proof of benevolence to call us and other living creatures into existence by a word, or a simple act of his will. But although nothing is difficult to his power, there are cases in which it cannot be immediately exercised; because other perfections of his nature are concerned in the effect, and a harmony among them must be previously established. Redemption is not an act of omnipotence alone, nor of love alone. It is not an act of creation, but a moral administration; and hence it exhibits a provision and combination of means, illustrative of the riches of his wisdom. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."* The person employed in accomplishing this design, the circumstances in which he appeared, and the work assigned to him, are so many distinct proofs of the incomprehensible goodness in which it originated. The title, Son of God, represents him not only as the object of strong and tender love, but as a divine person, and infinitely superior to the highest spirit in the scale of created being. Such was the Minister of mercy to our world; but his condition in it by no means accorded with his essential dignity. It was a condition of poverty and suffering, and it terminated by a death accompanied with every circumstance of cruelty and ignominy. By these surprising means was the benevolent purpose of Heaven carried into effect. The price of our redemption was blood, human blood indeed, but enhanced in value above all calculation, by the personal greatness of the victim. It is only when we look beyond the external appearance, and contemplate the intrinsic excellence of the sufferer, that we can make an approach to a just conception of the transcendent love which provided such a sacrifice for the worthless race of man. And reflecting upon the character of our Saviour, and the relation in which he stood to our offended Creator, we must be sensible, that by appointing him to die for us, he has given a higher demonstration of love than if the whole system to which we belong had been offered up as an atonement for our sins.

The argument will be strengthened by a view of the design which such means were employed to accomplish. If we could tell what is implied in salvation, how many and how great are the evils from which we are delivered, how many and how great are the blessings with which we are enriched, we should be able to estimate the love from which it has emanated. Think of the miseries under which human nature now groans, and of the greater miseries which the guilty mind forebodes in the state of retribution; and remember, that it was to rescue us from these, to abolish the curse, and chase away the shades of sorrow and despair, that the Son of the living God expired upon the cross. Think again of the good which man desires, and is capable of enjoying; of the peace and hope which tranquillize the heart, and cheer it with the opening prospect of glory; of the perfection which we shall hereafter attain, the transports of the righteous in the immediate presence and fruition of God, and of an eternity of pleasures always fresh and perpetually increasing; and remember, that it was to procure this inconceivable felicity for worthless men, to gladden the souls of thousands and millions, that the Son of the Blessed endured the agonies of death. Contemplating in thought what time will accomplish, we see the last and dreaded foe vanquished, and stript of his spoils; the grave giving up its dead, who leaving all their infirmities behind them, shall appear fair as in paradise, and fairer still than in that happy place; the earth purified and renovated to be once more the abode of innocence and joy; the choice of all generations united in one glorious assembly; angels associated with man, and God himself come down to dwell with them. "And I heard a great voice out of Heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."* Such is the delightful scene, to which our eye is directed by the light of prophecy. It is the reign of order and happiness, succeeding ages of turmoil and sorrow; it is an eternal spring after a long and dreary winter; it is the triumph of almighty love. Thus will terminate the revolutions of time, and the dispensations of heaven. Goodness infinite will fill all holy creatures with never-ending joy. It will be the jubilee of the universe. Every where will be heard the sound of praise, the songs of the redeemed, re-echoed by the happy spirits before the throne of God: "Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."†

"O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Gratitude is the return justly expected from the objects of beneficence; but it is often withheld from our great Benefactor, for the strangest of all reasons, because his goodness is constant and abundant! It is lightly esteemed, because it is exercised towards us in the common course of events; it is not felt, because we daily experience it! The character of benevolence is impressed upon all his works. His goodness is a reason why men should love and cheerfully obey him; and it renders those inexcusable who live without any acknowledgment of him, or dare to accuse his dispensations of unkindness. Sufferings they undergo, but not in such a degree as they deserve; mercies are bestowed upon them, of the least of which they are unworthy. Ours is a sinful world, but much happiness is enjoyed in it, and we have the hope of more, through the generosity of a Friend indeed, who has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.

* John iii. 16, 17.

* Rev. xxi. 34.

† Rev. v. 13.

LECTURE XXV.

ON GOD.

Justice of God: distinguished into Absolute and Relative—Remarks on the notion of Absolute Justice—Relative Justice respects Creatures: implies the giving of a Righteous Law, its enforcement with adequate Sanctions, and its Impartial Execution—Testimonies to this Attribute by Conscience, by Events in Providence, and by Redemption—Manifestation of it at the Last Judgment.

In treating of the Divine perfections, it is an obvious remark, that they are all essential and necessary to complete the idea of God; that is, of a Being possessed of every possible excellence. Not one of them could be wanting, without changing his character; so that if any of them is unintentionally or designedly omitted, the object of contemplation is not the true God, but a being who owes his existence to human misconception. While reason requires us to acknowledge them all, and to adore the fulness of the Godhead, they are calculated to make different impressions upon our minds, all leading, however, to sentiments of admiration, reverence, and love. Some are objects of pleasing, and others of awful contemplation. Wisdom delights us by the excellence of its ends, and the fitness of its means. Goodness charms us by the richness and variety of its gifts. It sheds a loveliness and an interest over the works of God; and emotions of joy and gratitude are felt while we look at nature smiling under his influence, and displaying the care and beneficence of a parent. But when we turn our thoughts to the unspotted purity of his nature, and the justice which presides in his moral government, a new order of sentiments arises. In the apprehension of guilty creatures, he seems no longer to smile, but to frown upon his works. The easy, placable disposition, so soothing to our minds, so consoling when conscience obtrudes its fears upon us, in which we portrayed him from the consideration of his goodness alone, gives place to sterner features, and we tremble before him as an offended Ruler and a Judge. We have no wish to cultivate close intercourse with him; we are repelled by the severity of his countenance, and would willingly withdraw to any distant place where we should be sheltered from his presence. Innocent creatures are affected in a different manner. In their eyes, justice gives a firmness and consistency to his character, and, if I may speak so, invests all his other perfections with an air of grandeur, and majesty. But the criminal dreads justice; and Divine justice is more formidable than that of man, because it is associated with knowledge from which offenders cannot conceal themselves, and with power which they are unable to resist. From this cause have originated the attempts which have been made to deprive God of his attribute, or to soften it down into a form which will create less alarm; to prove that it is not so inflexible as some persons of harsh and gloomy minds believe; that it does not mark our sins with extreme strictness, that it will not rigidly insist upon its demands, and that when moved to displeasure it is easily pacified. But the speculations of men, which are suggested less by their reason than by their wishes, are an unsafe ground on which to rest our religious system. In all subjects, and particularly in one of so much importance as the character of Him with whom we have to do, truth should be our aim, and the interests which might interfere with it should be dismissed from our thoughts. If we follow the guidance of unsophisticated reason, it will lead us to the same conclusion with the Scriptures, that God is just, as well as wise and good; that he is not only the Maker and Preserver, but also the Ruler of the world; and that as power and wisdom are required to guide and sustain inanimate matter, and creatures without reason, so justice is indispensable to the government of intelligent and moral agents, who are the proper subjects of law, and may deserve to be rewarded or punished. To deny his justice, is to wrest the sceptre from his hand, and to expose his government to contempt and insult by proclaiming impunity to his subjects. The many distinctions and relations, the knowledge of which justice supposes, must all be present to his infinite understanding, and we cannot conceive him to be, like his blind, weak, and miscalculating creatures, under any motive to disregard them. Now, when we take away ignorance, passion, and self-interest, real or imaginary, we remove all the causes of injustice.

The justice of God has been distinguished into absolute and relative, universal and particular. By the former is understood the rectitude of his nature, which leads him on all occasions to do what is right and equal; and the latter respects him in the character of a moral Governor, who will render to his subjects according to their desert. I do not see very clearly the nature of this distinction, which is not satisfactorily explained by those who adopt it, unless it be this, that absolute justice is expressive of what he is in himself, but relative justice considers him as standing in certain relations to his creatures, and acting according to the law which he has given to them.

It is certain, that God has an absolute dominion over his creatures. He might have created them or not, according to his pleasure; he might have given them a different nature, and have placed them in different circumstances. With respect to these things, there was no necessity that he should act or not act, that he should act in one way rather than in another. It is also certain, that he who created, had a right to annihilate his works; and might have done so, not only to inanimate matter, and living beings destitute of reason, but also to man, prior to any promise or engagement to prolong their existence. We surely will not deny to him who is Supreme, the liberty which we ourselves claim, to bestow our gifts for a limited time, and to resume them at pleasure. The gift of existence conveyed no right to the continuance of it. Creation was a free act of power, which did not lay the Creator under an obligation to exert it for ever, or for any definite period, in upholding what he had made. He gave man an immortal spirit; but we can conceive no reason, why he might not have given him a spirit which, like that of the lower animals would be extinguished at the death of the body. The spirit of man is endowed with nobler powers, and is capable, as we apprehend, of endless improvement; but although its high rank is associated in our minds with the notion of its immortality, we are not able to prove that there is any necessary connexion between them. In consequence of those powers, man was qualified to perform rational service, to yield moral obedience; but might he therefore claim a right to live forever? This idea cannot be entertained, without forgetting that he is a creature, who owed all because he had received all, and after the best employment of his faculties was an unprofitable servant. If we reflect upon the absolute dependence of a created being upon the author of his existence, we shall be convinced that he never could acquire a claim to any thing more than what he actually enjoyed, and that at every moment, the right of the Creator to withdraw his support, and leave him to return to nothing, remained unaltered.

Thus far, I think, we may safely proceed; but when we venture farther, and inquire, whether God had a right to subject his creatures to suffering, considered merely as his creatures, we are involved in a conflict between opposite opinions. Some deny, and others affirm, and have not hesitated even to maintain, that by his absolute justice and dominion, God could inflict the greatest torments, even those of hell, upon the most in-

nocent creature. We do indeed find that innocent creatures suffer, namely, the lower animals who are incapable of sin, and yet are subject to disease, and torture, and death. I acknowledge that there is difficulty here; but although the Scripture does not fully explain it, yet it gives a general notice that they suffer in consequence of their connexion with men. This is perhaps the meaning of these words: "The creature (or the creation) was made subject to vanity."* We are not competent to say, how far, consistently with justice, those evils may have come upon them, as consequent parts of a system, on which a curse was pronounced for the sin of man, to whom that system was subservient, and who was placed at the head of it. Leaving out this case, as for the reason now stated, not distinctly an example of absolute dominion, we may say, that it seems harsh and revolting to affirm, that God might without injustice inflict everlasting misery upon an innocent creature. The addition of the epithet *absolute* to justice, does not alter the nature of the thing; it is still justice although absolute; and I would ask them, what idea they entertain of justice, which could treat the innocent in the same manner as the guilty? If this is justice, I would say, what then is injustice? How does the one differ from the other? Surely men impose upon themselves, when they make use of a term in a sense directly the reverse of what in all other cases it conveys. There never was such an abuse of language, as to say, "This absolute justice or dominion"—observe how strangely dominion is substituted for justice, as if these were equivalent terms—"this absolute justice or dominion regards not any qualities or conditions of its object; but God can by virtue hereof inflict the highest torments on his innocent creature, and exempt from punishment the most nocent."†

Absolute justice is defined to be the rectitude of his nature, by which all his proceedings are regulated. All his acts are conformable to his infinite purity and perfection. Those who maintain, that he may subject an innocent creature to the greatest sufferings, are chargeable, in the first place, with transmuting rectitude into mere power, which is not a moral attribute; and in the second place, with forgetting that power is not his only perfection. In respect of power, God might do any thing, because he is omnipotent; but there are other properties of his nature, by which the exercise of power is limited. I do not mean to insinuate, that creatures have any claim upon their Creator, and hold it to be high presumption to make use of any expression, which imports that he is bound to bestow any favor upon them, prior to his own voluntary engagement. But God, if I may speak so, is a debtor to himself; that is, he will never do any thing which does not become him, which is not agreeable to his infinite perfection. Now, in the case which we are considering, his power is limited by his wisdom and goodness. As a wise Being, he would not inflict everlasting sufferings upon an innocent creature, because this would lead to the conclusion that righteousness was not more pleasing to him than unrighteousness, and that the punishment of the guilty was rather an effect of arbitrary will than of justice. As a good Being, he would not render his own offspring miserable without a cause; and to suppose that he might subject them to misery, and still be good, is to confound the ideas of malevolence and benevolence, as the hypothesis which we are combating confounds those of justice and power. It is strange that some men should take an unnatural pleasure in giving awful and forbidding representations of God, and should imagine, that they do honor to him by exalting one attribute at the expense of another, and exhibiting him in the character of an Almighty Despot.

Relative justice respects the relation in which God stands to his creatures as their moral Governor, and comprehends all the acts of his moral administration. Justice is distinguished into commutative and distributive. Commutative justice takes place in the exchange of one thing for another, and observes a strict proportion, giving and receiving an equivalent. It enters into human transactions, and ought to regulate all contracts and bargains between man and man. It cannot be ascribed to God, who can receive no equivalent from his creatures for any thing which he bestows upon them, all that they possess being already his own. "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"* Distributive justice consists in bestowing rewards and inflicting punishments according to an established rule. This justice belongs to God as the Governor of men, who will treat them according to the law under which they are placed. Avenging justice comes under this division. It is justice exercised in taking vengeance upon sinners, or punishing them for their transgression of the law. Whether it is essential to God, is an important question, which we shall find another opportunity to discuss.

The justice of God implies the three following particulars: That the laws which he has given to us are right, or suitable to our nature and relations; that they are enforced with proper sanctions; and that they are impartially executed. If these particulars concurred in the administration of an earthly ruler, if his laws were founded in equity, the recompense annexed to them proportionable, and rewards and punishments bestowed without respect of persons, we should pronounce his government to be just. We must conceive justice in God to be, upon the whole, of the same nature with justice in men, in the same manner as we conceive an analogy between his wisdom, goodness, and power, and those qualities in ourselves.

In the first place, the justice of God consists in giving righteous laws to men, laws suited to their nature, powers, and relations. Some affirm, that every thing which he commands is just, merely because he commands it, and make this the origin of moral distinctions; but from this opinion it would follow, that if he had given laws totally different, and even contrary to those which he has given, they would have been equally just. But here again justice and power are manifestly confounded; good and evil, right and wrong, have no existence in the nature of things, but are arbitrary differences. If we trace this notion to its consequences, it may be said, that falsehood might have been a virtue, and truth a vice; that it might have been lawful to steal, murder, and commit adultery; that men might have worshipped idols and not sinned; have lived without prayer, and have loved the creature more than the Creator. It would follow that there is no such thing as eternal and immutable morality. We maintain that, in general, things are not just because God has commanded them, but that he has commanded them because they are just. Our meaning is, that there was a reason for them in the nature of things, and that therefore, he has enforced them by his authority. There may be some precepts or parts of precepts in the decalogue to which we cannot apply this remark, but this is its general character. His law is summed up in these two injunctions, love to God and love to our neighbour; and how reasonable these are, no person can be at a loss to perceive. Our supreme regard is justly due to our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, in whom every excellence is found which can excite esteem or affection. The obligation to love him evidently arises from his nature and the relations which he bears to us. As men are his offspring, and resemble him in their moral and intellectual powers, and as we

* Rom. viii. 20.
† Gale's Court of the Gentiles, part iv. B. ii. c. 5. § 4.

* Rom. xi. 35.

are all sprung from the same stock, and have common feelings and interests, it is plain, that we ought to be well affected to those around us for his sake, and as constituting with us a family of brothers. That saying of our Lord which he delivered as a compend of morality has obtained universal admiration, by its obvious accordance with the dictates of reason and humanity. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them; for this is the law and the prophets."* Our present limits will not admit an inquiry into the justice of particular precepts. Objections may be made to them, by those who feel that they are opposed to their corrupt inclinations, as thieves and murderers object to the laws of the land of which every honest man approves; but an unprejudiced and upright mind will cordially assent to them as admirably adapted to our circumstances, and enjoining nothing which it is not fit that we should do, nothing which is not conducive to our individual interest upon the whole, and to the general good. It was no extravagant praise, when the Psalmist pronounced the statutes of God to be righteous, and declared, that he esteemed them concerning all things to be right.† If the righteousness of the law should be called in question on this ground, that its demands are too high for the present infirm state of our nature, it should be considered, that this disproportion did not exist from the beginning, for in that case there might have been ground for complaining of injustice; but that it has been superinduced by a cause, for which the Author of the law is not responsible. It fully vindicates the Lawgiver, that his law was adapted to our nature at its original formation. Had man wanted power to fulfil the law, there would have been no justice in subjecting him to it, and to have punished him for not fulfilling it would have been cruelty; but the loss of that power, since it was not forcibly taken from him, but voluntarily parted with, does not invalidate the claims of the Lawgiver. No act of ours can divest him of his supreme dominion; nor can it be supposed, with any appearance of reason, that our allegiance ceases as soon as we have disqualified ourselves for performing the duty which we owe to our Sovereign.

I have said that moral duties are enjoined because they are just, or because they are founded in the nature of things. But there are also duties which become just, solely because they are commanded. These are positive duties which have been prescribed to men, in a greater or less number, under every dispensation. Such was the prohibition of the tree of knowledge in paradise; such were the ritual observances of the ancient law; and such are baptism and the Lord's Supper under the gospel; to which may be added the appointment of one day in seven to be a holy rest, and the fixing of the day to the seventh, or to the first. The difference between these classes of duties is thus explained by Bishop Butler. "Moral precepts are precepts, the reasons of which we see; positive precepts are precepts, the reasons of which we do not see. Moral duties arise out of the case itself, prior to external command. Positive duties do not arise out of the nature of the case, but from external command; nor would they be duties at all, were it not for such command received from Him, whose creatures and subjects we are." He adds the following observation, to which some thoughtless declaimers on this subject would do well to attend. "As it is one of the peculiar weaknesses of human nature, when, upon a comparison of two things, one is found to be of greater importance than the other, to consider this other as of scarce any importance at all; it is highly necessary that we remind ourselves, how great presumption it is to make light of any institution of Divine appointment; that our obligations to obey all God's commands whatever are absolute and indispensable; and that commands merely positive, admitted to be from Him, lay us under a moral obligation to obey them, an obligation moral in the strictest and most proper sense."* According to this reasoning, positive duties are as really binding as moral, and the performance of the latter will be no compensation for the neglect of the former. Let it be observed that the obligation to both arises from the authority of God; for even moral duties, which are founded in the nature and relations of things, become strictly and formally duties in consequence of a law. That only is obedience which is done from respect to the will of a superior. When we perform certain actions solely because they are consonant to reason, or because we perceive them to be fit and proper in our circumstances, we merely adapt our conduct to the order of nature. As it is certain that our Maker has a right to propose any test of our obedience, the reasonableness of positive duties cannot be denied; and their goodness is evinced by their connexion with our interests, as they contribute to promote the great ends of religion.

In the second place, the justice of God consists in enforcing his laws with proper sanctions. By the sanction of a law, we mean something distinct from its precepts, which is added the more effectually to secure the obedience of the subjects. A simple command would be obligatory, if the person issuing it were possessed of legal authority; but it would not materially differ from a counsel or advice, if the lawgiver contented himself with enjoining obedience, and made no inquiry whether his will was respected or despised. The law of God is enforced by rewards and punishments, and justice is concerned in fixing the proportion of these. In cases where reward is due, it may be greater than the service deserves, without any violation of justice, but it cannot be less. No wrong is done when a person receives more than he is entitled to, but he sustains an injury if the recompense does not correspond to the value of the work. With respect to punishment, justice requires that it should be exactly adjusted to the crime. To punish with too great severity is cruel; to punish with too little, is contrary to moral rectitude, if the end of punishment is recompense, and defeats in some measure the purpose, if the end be to deter others from transgression. It is, however, necessary to observe, that justice does not strictly require that God should reward the obedience of his creatures, because their powers, natural and moral, being derived from his bounty, the exercise of them can give them no claim upon him; and they are bound to employ them in his service, although there were no prospect of a recompense. Men are led into a gross error by transferring ideas arising from their relations to one another, to the relation which subsists between them and their Maker. We are, in a certain sense, independent of one another, masters of our time, our skill, and our strength; and if, at the request of our neighbour, we devote these to his benefit, it is right that he should give an equivalent. But, in the present case, the obligations are all on our part; the creature is the property, and at the disposal of the Creator; we have already received more favours from him than we are able to repay: our services are previously due, and after we have performed them, we are still in debt. Merit is a word without meaning when connected with the obedience of men; it is impossible in the nature of things. Justice exercised in remunerating our services is founded on a gracious convention. The claim results not from the intrinsic worth of our obedience, but from an act of God himself, by which he has engaged to recompense it. If he has promised to reward our works; if he has entered into an agreement, binding himself to

* Mat. vii. 12. † Ps. cxix. 128.

* Analogy of Religion, Part ii. c. 1.

bestow certain favours in consideration of them, justice requires, that the terms on his part should be fulfilled, when the condition on our part has been performed. It is on this ground that the apostle says, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name."* Punishment admits of a different statement. It is the recompense strictly due to transgression, and God is righteous in inflicting it, independently of any previous stipulation. "Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance? God forbid; for how then shall God judge the world."† If the law of God is just, as being founded on the nature of things, and on his will, which is holy and wise, there must be an intrinsic demerit in sin, which ought not to escape with impunity. However partial we are to ourselves, we cannot but see, that actions which imply contempt of the supreme authority, and directly aim at disturbing the moral order and government of the universe, deserve to be animadverted upon with the greatest severity. We cannot consider punishment in this case as an arbitrary exercise of power; we perceive a fitness in it, a relation of one thing to another, which appears to a reasonable mind to be natural and necessary.

Theologians have been much divided in sentiment with respect to the question, whether avenging justice is essential to God; that is, whether the punishment of sin flows from the purity and rectitude of his nature, or is an effect of his will. Hence some have maintained, that he might have pardoned sin without an atonement; and others maintain, that he could not. The language of Scripture on this subject is strong: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity." "Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all the workers of iniquity." "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." "Our God is a consuming fire."‡ To suppose that nothing is intended, but that God has formed a resolution to punish sin, while he might have pardoned it, is to give a strange turn to expressions which certainly suggest at first view a very different sense. The obvious inference from them is, that sin is contrary to his nature; that there is an eternal repugnance between them; that he can never be reconciled to sinners considered in themselves; that he is led to punish them, not by the same necessity by which fire consumes combustible materials, but by a moral necessity as natural and irresistible. It is allowed that there is intrinsic demerit in sin. This postulate all will grant, who are not atheists, or who, not much better than they, imagine a Deity to whom human actions are indifferent, and subvert all religion by denying moral distinctions. If there is intrinsic demerit in sin, it is just to punish it; and to suppose that it might not be punished, that God, if it had seemed good to him, might have suffered it to pass with impunity, is to suppose that he might have done what is not consistent with justice. Men impose upon themselves when they talk of justice, which may punish or not according to its pleasure. The admission of this alternative destroys the idea of justice. What is called justice is not justice, but will, sometimes exerting itself in acts of kindness, and at other times in acts of severity. It is expedience, consulting not what the case abstractly demands, but what will be the best mode of managing it, with a view to a particular end. The world according to this hypothesis, might have been redeemed without the blood of Christ; but the wisdom of God judged, that it would be better to make his sacrifice the means, that the designs of his moral government would, in this way, be more fully answered, a more impressive lesson, a more effectual warning would be given to check the perverseness of mankind, and to inspire them with reverence for his law. But how does this theory agree with the statement, that it was the design of God in setting forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin, to declare his righteousness in the remission of it?* There is no display of righteousness in his death, if we might have been saved without his substitution. The plan is illustrative rather of prudence than of justice.

It is to no purpose to object, that as men may forgive one another's offences without satisfaction, so may God pardon sins committed against himself. What is a law to creatures, is not necessarily a law to the Creator. We may forgive offences without wrong to ourselves, or to the public; without wrong to the public, whose interests may happen to be in no way connected with the offence; without wrong to ourselves, because if we are content to forego the demand of reparation, no other person is injured. To avenge ourselves is not our province: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."† He has taken it out of our hands into his own; but this reservation implies that punishment is agreeable to his nature; is an exercise of power which becomes him as the moral Governor of the world. This is the light in which he ought to be considered, and it is a gross mistake to compare his procedure with that of a private individual. We should compare him with a magistrate, who is the guardian of the laws, and ask, whether it would be just in a civil ruler to permit crimes to pass unpunished. If all agree that such conduct would be unworthy of his station, that such misjudging clemency would endanger the interests of society, shall we ascribe to God what would be condemnable in man? We believe that the Judge of all the earth will do right, and must therefore believe, that avenging justice is essential to him in this character.

In the third place, the justice of God consists in the impartial execution of his laws; I mean, that he distributes rewards and punishments, not under the influence of favour and displeasure originating in no moral cause, but with an exact regard to the characters and actions of men. Their actions are considered solely in the relation of conformity or disconformity to the law, and are recompensed according to a rule previously laid down, and rigidly adhered to. Under his administration, viewed in its whole extent as comprehending the present and the future state, no such disorder takes place as we sometimes observe under human governments, where law is made to bend to private interests, and while one man is punished for a crime, another, who has committed the same offence, escapes with impunity. Read the Scriptures from beginning to end, and you shall find this to be the immutable principle of his dispensations, that he who obeys shall live, and the man who transgresses shall die. The causes which obstruct the course of justice among men, cannot influence the proceedings of the Supreme Judge. No person is so great as to set his justice at defiance, and none is so artful as to elude it. A guilty king has no advantage at his tribunal above the meanest of his subjects; and the most obscure individual, who performs his duty in silence, is as much under his eye as the man of rank and talents, who excites the admiration of the world by the splendour of his deeds. A law founded in justice knows no person, and is concerned with actions alone; so that if the innocent suffer, and the guilty are acquitted, the evil must be traced to the corruption of those by whom it is administered. The moral law having emanated from the nature of the Lawgiver, is under his own

* Heb. vi. 10. † Rom. iii. 5, 6.
† Hab. i. 13. Ps. v. 4, 5. Prov. xvii. 15. Heb. xii. 29.

* Rom. iii. 25. † Rom. xii. 19.

guardianship, and the love which he bears to it as an expression of his essential holiness, ensures its application without distinction of persons. "Hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment."* It may seem to be an objection against the justice of the Divine government, that good and evil are in many cases distributed according to no fixed rule, and that often the good falls to the lot of the wicked, and the evil, to the lot of the righteous. I shall afterwards consider this objection, and at present only observe, that it is founded on the false supposition, that the ends of the Divine government are accomplished in this world. It may also be accounted an objection, that by the dispensation of grace certain persons are selected as the objects of the love of God, and enjoy the advantages of this choice, although they have no better claim than others who are excluded; and that they are saved without performing the obedience which the law originally required as the indispensable condition of happiness. With respect to the first article in this objection, it is obvious that there is no injustice in the disposal of favours according to the will of the donor, whose right over his own property is indisputable, and who may be regulated by his own views in selecting the objects of his beneficence, when no person has a claim to be preferred to another. This is not a case in which justice has any concern. With respect to the second part of the objection, let it be observed, that although believers are not saved by the law, it is presupposed in their salvation that its demands have been respected and satisfied. A substitute has been admitted, who, having placed himself under its authority, has fulfilled all its requisitions. As he sustained the character of a representative, his obedience is imputed or transferred to them by the Lawgiver, who admitted this exchange of persons; that is, they are legally and justly treated as if the obedience had been performed by themselves. Justice is displayed even in this transaction. The law is not repealed, but established. Its terms are not altered, but rigidly maintained. Those who are saved, are considered as righteous; and although in respect of them the reward is of grace, it is a reward of justice in respect of the Savior. "Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness (or justice) for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his justice, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."† Justice, then, presides over all the Divine dispensations. The law is the eternal rule of right, and men are rewarded and punished according to its sanctions.

The consciences of men bear testimony to the justice of God. Conscience is that faculty which distinguishes right and wrong in actions, approves and disapproves, and anticipates the consequences whether good or evil. We do not call it the moral sense, because this account detaches it too much from the rational part of our nature, and makes it a passive and instinctive perception of the differences of things. It is not a mere feeling of impropriety, like that of which a person is conscious, when he has violated the rules of decorum; or a mere taste analogous to the sensations of sweet and bitter, or to the mental power which gives us the notions of order, fitness, and beauty. It is an act of the mind, comparing our conduct with the law of God, or what we apprehend to be his law, and pronouncing sentence according to its conformity or disconformity to the standard. It has been called the deputy or vicegerent of God. It performs the office not only of a monitor, by reminding us of our duty, and exciting us to attend to it, but also of a subordinate judge, summoning us before its tribunal, and pronouncing us to be innocent or guilty. Its sentences proceed on the assumption, that there is a law, holy, just, and good, with the demands of which men are bound to comply. It often exposes the vanity of our most specious pretences; and convicts us of sin, at the moment when we are employing our eloquence and sophistry to justify our conduct. In this manner, the right of God as the Supreme Governor to give law to men is maintained amidst their attempts to invalidate his authority, and to free themselves from his yoke. This advocate for his claims accompanies sinners in all their changes of place; is near to them in solitude and in company; disturbs them in their pleasures, and checks them when they are meditating wicked designs; hesitates not to upbraid those whom men would not dare to reprove, and utters a voice, which makes kings tremble on their thrones. Hence a belief of the Divine justice has prevailed in every age and country; and without revelation the Gentiles have been a law to themselves, "their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing or else excusing one another."* Under the influence of this principle, they understood certain events to be instances of retributive justice, and remarked the punishment of individuals in the calamities which befel them. Their histories abound in facts which were construed to be divine judgments, interpositions of the gods to avenge themselves upon those who were guilty of fraud, murder, and impiety. They erred in attributing these acts of justice to beings who existed only in their own vain imaginations: but they were right in interpreting them as proofs, that there is a moral government which will not permit crimes to escape with impunity. The institution of sacrifices, whatever was its origin, was expressive of a conviction that crimes were offensive to the gods, and that justice demanded satisfaction. It was an acknowledgment, that the guilty deserved to suffer; and the substitution of the devoted animal was founded on the hope that justice would accept of this compensation. The notions which they entertained of a future state, and of judges before whom departed spirits appeared to have a place assigned to them according to their deeds, in Elysium or in Tartarus, derived their authority from conscience, which told them that justice presided over the affairs of men, and that, if it suspended its decisions in this world, it would exert its power in the next. Conscience lends its effectual aid to preserve right ideas of religion. It corrects the loose notions which men are so ready to adopt on no better ground than their wishes, or from conclusions founded on partial observations. The benignity which is so manifest in the course of providence is assumed as a proof that God is all goodness, and will be very gentle in the treatment of his erring creatures; but conscience disturbs these speculations, and alarms the secure transgressor by the unexpected and unwelcome admonition, that "the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed."†

Let us inquire, whether there is any thing in the dispensations of providence, which tends to confirm the dictates of conscience. Providence implies the preservation of creatures, and the government of them according to their respective natures. Are there any indications of a moral government over men? Experience informs us, that pleasure and pain are dispensed; and the question at present is, whether these appear to be allotted to men in any degree according to their conduct, considered as morally good or evil? It is, indeed,

* Job xxxiv. 10—12. † Rom. iii. 25, 26.

* Rom. ii. 15. † 1 Sam. ii. 3.

said, that "no man knoweth love or hatred by all that is before him;"* and we seem to be precluded by these words from any attempt to collect proofs of Divine justice from the present state of things. But besides that Solomon in the Book of Ecclesiastes sometimes personates an objector against religion, and adopts the language of the profane, the words now quoted, if considered as expressive of his own sentiments, must be understood merely as stating the general character of the Divine dispensation, not as absolutely denying that there are any instances of retributive justice. That this is the light in which they ought to be viewed, will be evident upon reflecting, that the Scriptures do record many examples of the justice of God in the punishment of transgressors. Of these I may mention the destruction of the inhabitants of the old world by the flood; the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrha; the calamities which befel the Jews, and particularly their transportation to Babylon, and their subsequent dispersion by the Romans; and we may add the judgments executed upon individuals, as Pharaoh, Sennacherib, and Herod. Similar instances of Divine interference may be still observed, and will not be overlooked by those who are attentive to what is passing around them, and piously believe, that not a sparrow can fall to the ground, nor a hair of our head perish, without the knowledge of God. Without being guilty of the presumption and uncharitableness which our Savior reprobated, when speaking of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, and of the persons on whom the tower of Siloam fell, they will sometimes be constrained to acknowledge, that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." They will see the sins of men called to remembrance by the nature of their punishment; they will see the sinner smitten with the rod of anger in the moment of guilt, in the very act of transgression. It may be objected, that the distribution of rewards and punishments is not regular, and that upon the whole, the treatment which men experience from providence is little connected with their character and conduct. The prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous, have, in all ages, been a topic of declamation. But the occasional instances of retribution which we witness, are hints and notices, that justice is concerned in the actions of men, and are calculated to excite an expectation, that at some period, it will be more openly revealed. As we cannot doubt from what we see, that justice is one of the attributes of the Supreme Governor, the conclusion to which we are naturally led is, that there are reasons why he does not now more fully display it, and that when these reasons have ceased, or in another state where a new order of things will exist, an exact distribution will take place, and every man will be recompensed according to his works. There are many circumstances in the present order of things, which favour the idea of the moral government of God. The inward sentiments of approbation and disapprobation, which accompany the performance or the neglect of our duty, arising from the constitution which our Maker has given to us, ought to be considered as a declaration by himself, that the one is acceptable, and the other is displeasing to him. The same inference may be drawn from the health, and peace, and success, which are the consequences of virtuous conduct, and the troubles and diseases which are the consequences of vice; for if providence directs the course of things, these consequences are not owing to chance but to appointment, and are, therefore, a proof that God has a respect to the moral nature of actions in his dealings with men, or in other words, is just. As civil government is in this sense a Divine institution, that it arises from the nature and circumstances of men as social beings, and was therefore intended by Him who gave them that nature, and placed them in those circumstances, the protection which it affords to the obedient, and the punishment which it inflicts on the disobedient, are virtually acts of his administration, and admonitions of a judgment to come. The prosperity which sometimes falls to the lot of wicked men, will not be deemed a proof of the approbation of heaven by those who observe how little it contributes to real happiness, how much misery they often feel amidst the fulness of external enjoyments, and the usual effect of it in leading them to multiply crimes, and thus to aggravate their final doom. On the other hand, the Divine disapprobation cannot be inferred from the afflictions of the righteous, since they are accompanied with the consolations of religion, which make them joyful in tribulation, and are productive of salutary effects both in this life and the next. Upon the whole, providence bears witness to the justice of God: but as several causes obscure the evidence, we look forward to another state, in which there will be a clear revelation of his righteous judgments.

In the next place, let us inquire what evidence of justice is afforded by redemption. It is a maxim of reason and of Scripture, that guilt precedes suffering, and is the cause of it. We cannot conceive a benevolent Being to subject innocent and obedient creatures to pain, or to inflict it arbitrarily, in the mere exercise of sovereignty. Yet we find that a person who is acknowledged to have been free from the slightest stain of impurity, and of whose moral conduct Heaven itself testified an unqualified approbation, spent his days in such affliction, and closed his career so unhappily, that he is emphatically called "a man of sorrows." This case seems to present an objection against the justice of God, which it is impossible to solve on the common principles of reason; but the light of revelation clears up the difficulty. It is natural to suppose, that since he was personally innocent, he must have been somehow connected with the guilty, so as to suffer on their account; and such we are informed was the fact, for he sustained the character of the legal representative of sinners. It may be thought, however, that this explanation is by no means satisfactory: and, accordingly, some reject the idea of substitution as at variance with this first principle of justice, that every man should stand or fall for himself. This objection, however, is not supported by the general sense of mankind, among whom suretiship is held to be justifiable in certain cases, and upon certain conditions, and is frequently admitted. The first intention of the law of God and the laws of man, is that the subjects shall be personally responsible for their conduct; but it has been judged expedient occasionally to relax this rigour, and to allow the obligation to be transferred to another with his consent. It should be remembered, that he, who presented himself as the surety of sinners, possessed a power which belonged to no other man. He was complete master of his own life; and as the possession of it was the consequence of his own voluntary act in assuming our nature, so he held it for the purpose of surrendering it as a ransom for others. It being evident that he might dispose of it according to his pleasure, there can be no doubt, that the Lawgiver might accept it instead of the forfeited lives of transgressors. If, by the sacrifice of an innocent person, to whom no injury was done because he suffered from choice, God's hatred of sin would be manifested, a demonstration given of its demerit to all intelligent creatures, and the authority of his government maintained, all the ends of justice would be gained.

If it be admitted, that the substitution of Christ was consistent with justice, it is evident, that this expedient has served to give a full and awful display of that perfection. It can hardly now be a question, whether

* Eccl. ix. 1.

avenging justice is essential to God, when we see it taking its course on an occasion which would have prevented the exercise of it, if such a thing had been possible. If God could have permitted sin to escape with impunity; if the determination to punish it had not proceeded from his nature, but merely from his will, he would not have subjected his own Son to a cruel and ignominious death. He would not have delivered him up after his earnest and repeated prayer, that, if it were possible, the cup might pass from him. Has he any pleasure in suffering for its own sake? Would it have been agreeable to him, to see a person so dear to him bleeding and dying without a sufficient cause? No; the unavoidable conclusion is, that the death of Christ was the indispensable condition of the redemption of the world; that the designs of mercy, abstractly considered, were at variance with the demands of justice; and that, to establish harmony between them, it was necessary that justice should be satisfied. This was the most solemn display of justice; the highest proof that it is as truly an attribute of the Divine nature, as power and wisdom. It no longer admits of a doubt, that there is a necessary connexion between guilt and punishment. Who can hope for impunity if the Son of God did not escape?

In the last place, the justice of God will be openly manifested at the end of time, when the present administration will terminate. The ends of justice, so far as it consists in retribution, would be answered by the sentence pronounced upon every individual immediately after death; for it is enough that the state of men in the future world, correspond to their characters and conduct in the present. But the general judgment is designed for the manifestation of justice, to bring it out of the obscurity and uncertainty in which it is involved during this life, that all may see it, and be convinced that there is no respect of persons with God. It is for this purpose, that the whole human race will be convened before the tribunal of Christ, the sentence upon the righteous and the wicked will be publicly pronounced, and their works will be produced as evidence, that they are treated as they ought to be. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."* Of the proceedings at the grand assize, the description is figurative, and borrowed from the proceedings before a human tribunal. There will be no examination of witnesses to establish the facts; but it is said, that the books will be opened, and the dead will be judged out of those things which are written in them.† This is not to be literally understood; there is no written record of human actions; nor is it necessary, as the Judge is omniscient, and what is past, is as distinctly before him as what is present. It is to assure us of the strictness and impartiality of the judgment that books are mentioned; to signify, that the final estimate of every man's conduct, will be as correct, as if a register had been kept of his actions during the whole course of his life. No crime will be imputed to any man, which he did not commit; nor will any be omitted, of which he was guilty. His advantages and disadvantages, his talents and opportunities, his difficulties and temptations, all the circumstances which influenced his conduct, will be taken into the account; and judgment will proceed upon this equitable principle, that much or little should be required of men according to what they received. "As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ."‡ The result will be a universal conviction that all is right; a conviction in the mind of every man with regard to himself and to others. Not even the guilty will dare to accuse the justice, by which they are condemned: however reluctant, they will be compelled to acknowledge the righteousness of their doom: and their sufferings will be heightened by the sad reflection, that they are the fruits of their own doings: "Just and true are thy ways, O thou King of saints."*

* Matth. xx. 31, 32. † Rev. xx. 12. ‡ Rom. ii. 12, 16.

LECTURE XXVI.

ON GOD.

His Truth and Faithfulness—Truth of his communications to Man through the Senses, Reason, and by Revelation—Faithfulness of his Promises—Remarks respecting the Promises—Examples of performance—Faithfulness of his Threatenings—Sincerity of his Invitations to Sinners—The Nature of God incapable of Error or Deceit.

I proceed now to consider the truth and faithfulness of God. When we call him the true God, we distinguish him from those to whom this designation has been improperly given, and affirm, that he has not only the name, but the nature and perfections of God. "The idols of the nations are silver and gold, but our God is in the heavens." When we call him the God of truth, our design is not to assert his Divinity, but to illustrate his character; and we declare that an undeviating regard to truth marks all his communications to mankind; that he never deceives them, but treats them with the same openness and sincerity which they are required to observe in their intercourse with one another. Did we not believe that truth is an attribute of God, we should be involved in the utmost uncertainty, and driven to absolute scepticism. For ought that we could tell, human life might be a dream. Truth would be known, if known at all, only as a thing unattainable; and wandering in endless doubt and perplexity, we should close our comfortless existence, without being able to tell whence we had come, and whither we were going. A Divine revelation would afford no satisfaction, because amidst the subversion of all evidence, it would be impossible to ascertain that it had proceeded from the Author of our being; and even although this point were settled, we could not determine whether its statements were worthy of credit. The truth of God gives validity to the deductions of reason, and is the foundation of faith. "Let God be true, but every man a liar."† In this emphatic manner does an apostle affirm that truth is essential to God. Whatever may become of the veracity of men, who may be induced by temptation to deceive, the Divine veracity shall never be justly impeached.

When we speak of truth as one of his perfections, we assume, that the communications which have been made by him to men accord with the nature of things, and are genuine expressions of his views and intentions. Falsehood consists in designed misrepresentation of the subject of discourse, and in creating expectations which we do not mean to realize, in affirming that that is which is not, and that we will do what we have resolved not to do. There are different ways in which God has made declarations to us; by our senses, by reason, and by revelation. On each of these we shall bestow some observations; and with respect to the last, in which we are so deeply concerned, I shall consider the doctrines which it proposes to our faith, the promises which awaken our hopes, the threatenings which are addressed to our fears, and shew that these, as well as the invitations, entreaties, and expostulations with which the Scriptures abound, are characterised by veracity and sincerity.

* Rev. xv. 3. † Rom. iii. 4.

In the first place, God is true in all his declarations. These are made to us, first, through the medium of our senses, by which we acquire the knowledge of external objects. We are impelled by the law of our nature, to give implicit credit to their testimony, to believe that objects exist without us, that they are invested with certain forms, and endowed with certain qualities, and arranged in a certain order. The evidence of sense has indeed been controverted, and what is there that vanity and ill intention have not endeavored to perplex? and some philosophers have maintained that matter does not exist; that the sun, the earth, trees, men, and animals, are merely ideas in our minds. Their arguments may have puzzled those who could not readily detect their fallacy, but have not, I presume, produced conviction in a single instance. Their reasoning had no effect upon themselves; and while they pretended that the universe was a phantom, they were as careful as other men not to throw themselves into fire or water, or to leap over a precipice. It is acknowledged, that our senses do not make us acquainted with the internal nature of objects; but this can only be called an imperfection, and does not invalidate the certainty of the information which they do give us. As far as they go, they are faithful instructors, who convey to us the knowledge of the qualities or properties of things, but leave us in ignorance of their essences, because the knowledge of these, if we were capable of it, would be of no real utility. We may be content not to know what matter is, since we know its primary and secondary qualities, for this knowledge is sufficient for all the purposes of life. Our senses do indeed sometimes deceive us; but it is only when they are in a diseased state, or when they are disadvantageously situated for making observations, or when we are too hasty in drawing conclusions. When all the requisite conditions are provided; when the eye, for example, is perfect, the object is at a due distance, and the degree of light is sufficient to exhibit it clearly, and when we take a deliberate view of it, it appears to us exactly as it ought to appear according to the laws of vision. We find ourselves safe and comfortable in acting according to the notices of our senses, and under their guidance, in subservience to reason, the human race has been preserved for thousands of years.

God also communicates knowledge to us by the medium of reason. It must be acknowledged that reason often errs, but it is not therefore a fallacious faculty. It discovers many truths, physical and moral, in which the mind rests with full confidence. There were philosophers in ancient times who avowed universal scepticism, maintaining that certainty was unattainable upon any subject, and that the utmost at which we can arrive is probability; but their system has been rejected by all rational men. Truth may often lie at the bottom of a well, but in most cases we are furnished with the means of drawing it up. The fallibility of reason is, however, indisputable, and the many mistakes into which men have been betrayed are proofs of it. Yet if we give due attention, we shall perceive that these are not so much owing to the faculty itself, as to the abuse of it. If we employ it upon subjects which lie beyond its sphere, we shall be led into the region of hypothesis and conjecture. If we proceed hastily, without going through the process of regular investigation; if we draw general inferences from partial premises; if we begin with prejudice, and are guided by passion, we have no right to complain that we have gone wrong, for we have voluntarily turned into a devious path. Reason, properly used, is a guide to man in all matters which belong to its jurisdiction; but as it was not intended to suffice for all purposes, nor bestowed that he might be independent of his Maker, he ought to look up to the Source of wisdom, and receive with gratitude the extraordinary or supernatural discoveries, with which he has been pleased to favor him.

With respect to these communications, we affirm that they are true in all their parts; that whether they relate to doctrines or to facts, they are free from the slightest mixture of falsehood. That the Scriptures are the word of God, is not a point to be believed upon their own naked testimony, any more than a man is to be believed in any matter relating to himself simply upon his own affirmation. A book, indeed, may contain internal marks of divinity, in the sublimity of its doctrines, the holiness of its precepts, the harmony of its parts, and its power to affect the conscience and heart; or it may betray its human origin by the meanness of its sentiments, its licentious tenets, its manifest errors and contradictions. But although we may be convinced by internal evidence, that the Scriptures are a revelation from God, and every man, who is enlightened and renewed by the Holy Ghost, has the witness in himself that they are true; yet our belief of their heavenly origin rests, in the first place, upon external evidence, upon ancient and catholic tradition, referring them to the times when, and the persons by whom, they are said to have been written, upon the miracles by which the commission of the prophets and apostles was attested, and upon the prophecies which have been fulfilled, or are at present fulfilling. Having ascertained in this manner, that God has made a declaration to mankind upon subjects of importance, and in what documents it is contained, we are bound to receive it with profound respect. And here it is proper to remark, that the office of reason in reference to a revelation, is not to discuss its contents, to try them by its own standard, and to approve or disapprove, as they agree or disagree with it; for this would be to treat it as if it were not a revelation, at the moment when we acknowledge it to be such, or to insinuate that the word of God, although known to be his word, is not entitled to credit, unless it be supported by independent proof. The sole province of reason is to examine the evidence exhibited, to shew that it is his word, and to investigate its meaning by the rules which are used in determining the sense of any other book. These preliminaries being settled, the state of mind which a revelation demands is faith, implicit faith, to the exclusion of doubts and objections; the subjection of our understandings to the authority of God, entire submission to the dictates of infinite wisdom. The reason is, that this testimony supplies the place of all other evidence. Our senses are here of no service, because the subjects revealed are past and future, invisible and spiritual. Our reason furnishes no data from which they can be deduced, because they belong to a supernatural order of things, which mere reason was not intended to contemplate. But if human testimony convinces us of the truth of many things, which we have not seen, and have no means of proving, the testimony of God is the ground of the highest assurance. There may be doctrines in revelation which are new and strange, which we in vain attempt to comprehend, which are at variance with our previous conceptions, and the common notions of mankind. But the difficulty which we feel in assenting to such doctrines, should yield to the reflection, that they are attested by Him whose understanding is infinite, while ours is bounded by very narrow limits; and that they relate to subjects, of which a small portion of humility might make us sensible that we are not competent judges; his nature, and counsels, and dispensations. On attentively perusing the Scriptures, we find, that although they consist of many books, which were composed in different ages, and by persons of different habits and tempers, they harmonise in their views and statements, and no real contradiction has been discovered. We find also that the historical parts of them are confirmed by other authentic records, and

that the doctrines and precepts, as far as we are able to judge, are agreeable to the purest dictates of reason. Having these evidences of their truth, we are bound in reason to believe, that those articles which are mysterious and incomprehensible, are equally true, and appear such to beings of superior understanding. Candour would require, that if a book were distinguished by the justness of its sentiments and the accuracy of its details so far as we could read it, we should believe that it maintained the same character throughout, although the remaining portions of its contents were written in a language which we did not understand, or were so obliterated that we could not fully make out the sense of the Author. Nothing is more equitable in such a case, than to judge of what is unknown from what we do know. The ascertained truth of some parts of Scripture, is a voucher for the truth of other parts, which we have been prevented from subjecting to the same test. At the same time, this is only a subsidiary argument; and we should remember that we have the highest evidence for the truth of every part, in the testimony of God himself. The whole proceeds from the same source; and the most exact and learned inquiries have terminated in establishing their entire credibility, and demonstrating that the Bible is the only book on which we can depend for information respecting the nature and government of God, the conduct we should pursue, and the hopes which we may entertain. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."*

Besides those declarations by which knowledge is communicated, there are engagements with men into which God has entered by pledging his word for good or evil, according to their conduct. His truth in relation to these is properly called faithfulness, and comes to be considered in the second place. The obvious division of them is into promises and threatenings.

God is faithful in his promises. They are expressive of an intention to bestow the blessings exhibited, and will be performed to those who have a claim to them; "Faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it." To prevent misapprehension and to obviate objections, it is necessary to remark that the promises are distinguishable into two classes, absolute and conditional. An absolute promise is one, the performance of which is suspended upon no condition, and is to be expected solely from the faithfulness of the promiser. It is significant of God's determinate purpose to bestow some blessing, or to bring to pass some event pregnant with good. The failure of such a promise would imply a direct violation of truth: "But God is not a man that he should lie; neither the Son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"† Of this nature was the promise of a Saviour, which flowed from his sovereign love, and did not depend upon the conduct of men. It was therefore performed at the appointed season, although the nations of the world had for ages provoked him by their idolatry and their other crimes, and among the Jews faith could hardly be found when the Messiah appeared. Of this nature too, was the promise to him of a spiritual seed, in consequence of which those who are dead in trespasses and sins are quickened by the Divine Spirit, who begins to operate upon them when they are unworthy of his care, and instead of soliciting his agency, are disposed to resist it. Other promises are conditional; I mean that they suppose some action or course of action as necessarily preceding the performance, some previous state of mind in the person upon whom the blessing is to be bestowed. The promise of salvation is not made to all who hear the gospel, but to those alone who believe it. There is a difference between the publication and the making of a promise. The publication simply and generally announces the fact that there is such a promise; the making of it respects individuals, and declares that upon them the promised good will be bestowed. The promise of salvation is published to all, but the persons to whom it is made are specified in the following words, "He that believeth shall be saved."* From zeal for the doctrine of free grace, some have been betrayed into the mistake of representing the promises in general as absolute, and have not attended to the difficulty in which they involve themselves. If their view of the promises were correct, every man to whom they are addressed, would have a claim to salvation, as a promise of pardon to all the criminals in a kingdom would entitle them all to life and liberty. It is idle to say, that they will all be saved if they believe; for this is to retract what has been affirmed, or rather is to maintain a self-contradictory proposition, that the promise is at once absolute and conditional. If God had promised to save all men, without specifying any condition, or term, or qualification, or previous state of mind, his faithfulness would require that they should be all saved without a single exception. But a conditional promise may not be performed without any impeachment of his truth, since the cause of its non-performance is not a failure on his part, but on the part of men. The Israelites who came out of Egypt, were not admitted into the land of Canaan, into which God had promised to conduct them. Had he changed his intention? Had he recalled his word? No; but they had proved a disobedient and ungrateful race, and so had forfeited all claim to the inheritance. "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years; and ye shall know my breach of promise."† An apostle referring to this case says, "We see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."‡

Examples of the faithfulness of God in performing his promises, are frequent in the history of the saints. They are recorded in Scripture for his honour, and as an encouragement to faith. We see him fulfilling his word at the appointed time. The promise of the Messiah was made immediately after the fall, and was renewed on different occasions; but there was an interval of four thousand years before the seed of the woman appeared to bruise the head of the serpent. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."‖ The descendants of Abraham were long strangers in Canaan and slaves in Egypt; but the promise by which they had been sustained did not fail, and the prefixed time of their deliverance was punctually observed. "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out of the land of Egypt."§ These instances enforce the exhortation, "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."¶ We see, besides, in the history of the saints, the Almighty fulfilling his word when obstacles insurmountable by human power and wisdom stood in the way, and realizing the hopes of his people when all circumstances seemed to justify despair. The case

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. Ps. xii. 6. † Numb. xxiii. 19.

* Mark xvi. 16. † Numb. xiv. 34. ‡ Heb. iii. 19. iv. 1.
‖ Gal. iv. 4, 5. § Exod. xii. 41. ¶ Hab. ii. 3.

of Abraham furnishes a striking illustration. A son was promised to him by Sarah, who was barren; but the time passed on till both had arrived at such an age, that according to the laws of nature there could be no hope of posterity; and when Isaac was born, Sarah was ninety, and Abraham was a hundred years old. The steadfast faith of the patriarch while there was not a single thing to encourage him, and what was improbable at first had become physically impossible, was truly wonderful, and is mentioned in the Scriptures in the highest terms of commendation: "He was strong in faith, giving glory to God."* Heaven and earth may pass away, but his word shall not pass away. If ordinary means will not suffice, miracles will be wrought that his declared purpose may be accomplished. We may therefore confidently expect, that his other promises respecting the church, and the interests of the individual members of it in this world and the next, will be performed with the same punctuality, and that "there shall not fail one good word of all that the Lord our God hath spoken."

Again, God is faithful in his threatenings, or his denunciations of evil against the transgressors of his law. His faithfulness in respect of these implies these two things; his intention to inflict the evil denounced, and the actual infliction of it if no just cause occur to prevent it. The same distinction, however, is necessary, which we made when speaking of the promises. These threatenings must be considered as absolute or conditional; as absolute, when they express the unalterable purpose of God to punish the guilty; as conditional, when they express his purpose to punish hypothetically, or on the supposition of continued disobedience and final impenitence. Of the former, we have examples in the case of the rebellious Israelites, who were doomed to perish in the wilderness; in the case of the Amalekites, concerning whom the Most High declared with an oath, that he would utterly put out their remembrance from under heaven; and in the case of the antichristian Church, which is irremediably devoted to destruction. In none of these cases was room left for repentance on the part of God, or of the objects of his wrath. An example of conditional threatening is found in the history of Nineveh. When Jonah proclaimed in its streets, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," no condition was expressed; but it appears from the event to have been implied, that the doom of the city would be suspended by the repentance of the inhabitants. God himself has taught us to account upon the same principle for other threatenings which are not executed. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."† To the same class of threatenings belong those which are directed against sinners living under the dispensation of the gospel. It is evident that they are only conditional declarations of God's intention to punish them; for the guilty are provided with the means of escape, and many through faith in Christ obtain the pardon of their sins. Hence, although it is certain that every sin deserves eternal condemnation, the final perdition of the hearers of the gospel is ascribed to unbelief, because it is a rejection of the offer of mercy. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him."‡ But although the faithfulness of God does not require the execution of his threatenings when a change has taken place in the character and conduct of men, it does require that they should be executed when circumstances continue the same. His denunciations are not vain terrors, intended to keep us in awe, but which a man of courage may disregard with impunity. The day of retribution will demonstrate how presumptuous are the hopes of the guilty; and their state in the world to come will be a solemn and impressive testimony to all intelligent creatures, that the judgments of the Lord are righteous and true. "When he that heareth the words of this curse, shall bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in his book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven."*

Some maintain that God ought to perform his promises, because they have created an expectation, and conferred a right to the blessings promised; but that there is no obligation to execute his threatenings, because no injury will ensue, but on the contrary an unspeakable advantage. There is, however, a fallacy in this argument. It supposes that there is no moral good in truth itself, nothing in its nature to make it sacred and inviolable, and that the obligation to respect it is resolved into utility. It confounds two things closely allied, yet perfectly distinct, truth and justice; and represents a person as bound to fulfil his word, not because he has pledged it, but because others have acquired a right from his engagement, like that of a creditor to the payment of a debt. But as men ought to speak truth for its own sake, and without any respect to the consequences, which can be considered only as motives to what was previously a duty, so God is led by his nature to speak truth, and to redeem every pledge which he has given, not so much for the sake of his creatures, as from a regard to himself. It is not because men have obtained a conventional right to certain blessings that he will bestow them, but because he will not deny himself; and for the same reason, he will not fail to give effect to his denunciations of evil. The design of this reasoning is to make it probable, that notwithstanding the explicit declaration of his purpose to punish transgressors, he may relent, and suffer them to escape with some temporary correction; but besides that the reasoning is founded on a false principle, it forgets that the threatenings originated in the justice of God, and consequently, that not to execute these would be inconsistent with his essential rectitude as well as with his veracity. If truth were a matter of expedience, it might yield to occasion and circumstances, but its character is immutability, and it will maintain its honour in the treatment of both sinners and saints.

Lastly, God is sincere in the admonitions which he addresses to men, in his expostulations, his intreaties, and his invitations. We find him remonstrating with them for their folly and wickedness, warning them of the consequences of sin, and beseeching them to embrace the offers of salvation. Have we any reason to suspect that he is not in earnest? Why should we not give the same credit to him, which we should give to a person of known integrity and benevolence, who spoke to us in affectionate terms, and expressed great solicitude for our welfare? It is objected to his sincerity in this case, that he addresses himself to persons who, he knows beforehand, will pay no regard to his words, who are in fact incapable of attending to them, because they are in a state of moral insensibility and death, and to whom he will not give his effectual grace, to awaken them to serious consideration. Why does he dissuade them, it is asked, from that which will certainly take place, and express a desire for the salvation of those whom it is not his intention to save? It cannot be denied, that this is a difficulty of which we should endeavour, if possible, to obtain a solution, for

* Rom. iv. 20. † Jer. xviii. 7, 8. ‡ John iii. 36.

* Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

the glory of God as well as for our own satisfaction. Let it be observed, that the calls, invitations, and intreaties of Scripture may be considered as so many notices of our duty, as intimations to sinners that it is incumbent upon them to return to God by repentance, to believe the revelation of his grace, and to engage in the work of their salvation. As it will not be denied that this is our duty, so it cannot be doubted that God may enforce it in whatever manner his wisdom judges to be best, although he knows that we will not comply, because his right to command does not depend upon our disposition or our actual ability to obey, but upon the relation in which we stand to him as his creatures and subjects. Again, the counsels and expostulations of Scripture may be considered as declarations of what is agreeable to him, and in this view cannot be suspected of insincerity, with whatever earnestness they are expressed. The obedience of all men would be pleasing to God, who necessarily loves holiness and hates sin. Their happiness would be as pleasing to him as their holiness, because he is a benevolent Being, and cannot will their misery abstractly considered, or under the notion of an ultimate end. He has sworn by his life, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they should turn to him and live.* If he does subject many of them to death, he is compelled to this severity for the honor of his government, as a good ruler among men, who desires the welfare of all under his authority, is compelled to punish the breakers of the law. In a word, the design of those parts of Scripture may be to render sinners inexcusable, to shew that their perdition is imputable to themselves alone. They cannot plead that they were destitute of the means of knowing their duty, that their attention was not called to it, and that motives of sufficient efficacy were not employed to excite them. It will appear that the fault was in themselves. Their own perverseness frustrated the methods which were used for their good. They were so eagerly bent upon sin, that no obstacles could stop them. God had done much to restrain them, and more than he was under any obligation to do.

It may be said that these observations do not meet the difficulty directly, and are applicable only to a partial view of it. It is not denied, that in any way which he chooses God may remind men of their duty, that their obedience would be pleasing to him, and that admonitions and reproofs render the impenitent inexcusable; but the perplexing question remains unanswered, How is the use of means for saving men consistent with a previous decree to exclude them from salvation? I am not aware that the question admits of an answer perfectly satisfactory. And what is the reason? Is it any real opposition between the decree of God, and the call of the gospel? or, in other words, is it a fact that God is insincere? No; the cause is our ignorance of the true nature and relation of the things which are to be reconciled. We know little about the decrees of God, much less than we are apt to imagine; and when they are the subject of discussion, we reason in the dark. But we understand what the Scriptures say respecting our duty, and the offer of salvation. Let us be content with this knowledge, which is all that is necessary for practice, and permit no speculation upon a subject beyond our comprehension to interfere with our belief of the Divine veracity, which is the only foundation of our faith and hope. We have full proof of it in all other cases; and it is surely reasonable to believe, that nothing hinders us from distinctly perceiving it in this case, but our own limited views. Let it be remembered, that whether we hold absolute or conditional decrees, the difficulty is the same, it being as impossible for the Arminian to reconcile the external call of the word with certain foreknowledge, as it is for the Calvinist to demonstrate its harmony with an independent and immutable purpose.

None of those reasons which lead men to deviate from truth, can have any influence upon God.

Men sometimes speak what is not agreeable to truth from ignorance, and misconception of the subject of discourse. It is unnecessary to state that a Being, whose knowledge is infinite, is liable to no misapprehension.

Men often tell lies for convenience, supplying by this expedient their want of power, or of other means to accomplish their purposes. Omnipotence stands in no need of stratagems, but goes straight forward to its end; it has the command of all means which wisdom may deem it fit to employ, and it can always effect its designs without them. It sometimes happens that men do not perform their promises from pure inability; they want the power which they possessed when they made them, or had a reasonable prospect of possessing. But there are no real obstacles to the performance of his promises; they are obstacles only in our apprehension. "He quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things which be not as though they were." "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary?" *

Men sometimes deceive others from malignity, that they may be amused with their errors, and derive an infernal pleasure from the disappointment of their hopes. God has his creatures at absolute command, and could entangle them in a snare from which their own sagacity could not extricate them. He could confound their faculties, make them mistake imaginations for realities, and pronounce good to be evil, and evil to be good; but he will not employ his power for such purposes, although he may, for the just punishment of those who receive not the truth in the love of it, deliver them up to strong delusion to believe a lie. He is not, however, the author of such delusions, which originate in their own minds, or in the artful representations of other wicked beings. Men would not be deceived if they would commit themselves to his direction, and attend to the instructions he has given in his word.

Men sometimes deceive others from fickleness of disposition. Sincere when they make promises, they change their intentions; and the expectations which were founded on the presumption of their steadiness are not realized. Immutability is an attribute of God, immutability of counsel as well as of nature. No new object or circumstance can occur to him; but every thing which will exist at the time when the promise is to be performed, was foreseen at the time when it was made. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."† He will be of the same mind to-morrow as he is to day; for "he is in one mind, and who can turn him?"‡ The promises which were recorded in the Scriptures hundreds and thousands of years ago, are as sure a foundation of faith and hope as they were at the moment when they were first published to the world.

No man, I presume, who believes that there is a God, will suppose him to be capable of falsehood and insincerity; and if objections are made, they can arise solely from certain statements of his proceedings in the Scriptures. Some of these have been anticipated and answered. If the supposed contradictions in the Scriptures should be objected, it would require more time than can be at present afforded, to shew how they are reconciled; and it is sufficient to observe, that if the contradictions were real, they would prove, not that God is without veracity, but that the writings in which they are found falsely pretend to be a Divine revelation. But on the supposition that the Scriptures were dictated by his Spirit, it may be asked, what is to be made of particular passages? We hear the prophet Jeremiah

* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

* Rom. iv. 17. Isa. xl. 28. † Acts xv. 18. ‡ Job xxiii. 13.

saying, "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed."* Admitting the translation to be right, we may consider the words as the exclamation of a good man in a moment of weakness, who has met with unexpected trials, and had hastily presumed that God would preserve him from them. He complains of being deceived, because his groundless expectations were disappointed. But the words may be rendered, "thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded;" for this is, in other places, the sense of the original term פתה; and then the meaning is, that God had irresistibly impelled him to perform the duties of his office, by which he had brought upon himself reproach and violence—had impelled him contrary to his own resolution to desist. Accordingly he adds, "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name: but his word was in my heart as a burning fire in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I would not stay."† By another prophet, God is represented as sending a lying spirit to be in the mouth of the prophets of Ahab, and as saying, "Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth and do so."‡ But Micaiah is relating a vision, in the interpretation of which every part of the description is not literally understood, and the general design is alone to be considered. God is often said to do what he only permits to be done. It is evident that nothing more was intended than to admonish Ahab that his prophets, who encouraged him to go to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, were deceiving him with the promise of victory; and this admonition so plainly expressed, this notice beforehand, is a proof that God had no immediate concern in deceiving him. As God is said to have directed the Israelites to borrow jewels from the Egyptians, which were not to be returned, and borrowing implies a promise to restore, it may seem that he authorised deceit in this instance. But the difficulty arises from a mistranslation, for the word שאל, rendered to *borrow*, signifies simply *to ask*. He merely directed the Israelites to ask these things from the Egyptians, and disposed the latter to comply with their request by his secret influence upon their minds, as Moses informs us in these words; "And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required, and they spoiled the Egyptians."‖ The only question which arises out of this case, relates to the justice of the transaction; and of this there will be no doubt, if we reflect that all human property being the gift of God, he may transfer it from one to another according to his pleasure, in the ordinary course of affairs, or by a miraculous interference; and that, when the Israelites were enriched at the expense of the Egyptians, they only recovered the wages of the long and laborious services which they had performed for the benefit of that people, and of which the due recompense had been hitherto withheld. It was right that they should be put in possession of a part of the wealth which their industry had so eminently contributed to produce; and if more fell to their share than was strictly due, the Egyptians were compelled to atone in this manner for their injustice.

* Jer. xx. 7. † Ibid. 9. ‡ 1 Kings xxii. 22. ‖ Exod. xii. 36.

LECTURE XXVII.

ON GOD.

His Holiness—Meaning of this term in Scripture—Definition of Holiness—Instances of its display in God's Works and Dispensations—General Reflections from the preceding Review of his Attributes, on the Incomprehensibility, All-sufficiency, and Sovereignty of God.

In Scripture, holiness is often attributed to God; and there are some peculiarities attending it, of which it will be proper to take notice in the introductory part of this lecture. He is said to be glorious in holiness, as if it constituted the distinguished excellence of his nature, and diffused a lustre over his other perfections. He swears by his holiness, and thus holds it out as the inviolable pledge for the truth of his promises, the most complete security that they shall be punctually performed. It is brought forward to enforce his commands, to guard his institutions against profanation and pollution, and to excite us to a watchful care of our thoughts, and words, and actions. It is represented as impressed upon all his works and dispensations, which are thus rendered both amiable and venerable. It was singled out as the subject of praise by the seraphim who surrounded the throne of Jehovah, when he appeared in the temple to the prophet Isaiah; and its solemn effect upon them and upon him, is too memorable to be passed over in silence. "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."*

The terms *holy* and *holiness* bear a variety of senses in Scripture, which it is not necessary at present to enumerate. There is one sense which is worthy of attention, because it frequently occurs. When applied to God, holy seems to signify august and venerable; and this is the meaning in more cases than we are apt to suppose, perhaps not much seldomer than it denotes purity, which is the idea commonly attached to it. I know not whether the passage quoted above may be considered as an example, but Jehovah appears to be pronounced thrice holy, because he was seated upon a lofty throne, was attended by the noblest creatures in the universe as his ministers, and his glory was displayed in every region of the earth. When the Psalmist pronounces his name to be "holy and reverend,"† the second epithet may be understood to be explanatory of the first; and when he says, that "his holy arm hath gotten him the victory,"‡ there is no direct reference to moral excellence, but to majestic force, to irresistible power. The command to "sanctify the Lord," is a command to treat him with all the reverence which is due to his transcendent greatness, and is thus explained by Isaiah: "Sanctify the Lord God of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread."‖ He is a being separated or distinguished from all other beings by his infinite excellence, as sacred things are separated from such as were common; possessed of every perfection intellectual and moral, in the highest possible degree, and therefore entitled to the most profound veneration of angels and men. His name should never be mentioned but with awe; and our whole conduct should testify that we are deeply sensible of his presence, and that there is nothing which we are so anxious to obtain as his favour, nothing which we so much dread as his displeasure.

While the holiness of God does certainly suggest, in many instances, the idea of greatness or majesty, which is an object of fear rather than love, it is not less certain that it is expressive, in other instances, of the purity of his nature. This is obviously the meaning of the concrete term in the following passage;

* Isa. vi. 1—5. † Ps. cxi. 9. ‡ Ps. xcviii. 1. ‖ Isa. viii. 13.

"As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."* There would be no force in the exhortation, if the holiness ascribed to God were not of the same nature with that required from us, for the one is referred to as the reason and the pattern of the other. Hence, when we call God holy, we mean that there are in his nature certain moral qualities or principles, analogous to those on account of which men are pronounced to be virtuous or holy; that he is perfectly pure, free from the slightest taint of pollution; that his will is always conformable to the rectitude of his nature, so that sin is the invariable object of his hatred, and righteousness the invariable object of his approbation. His holiness has been defined to be "that virtue or perfection, by which he wills and approves whatever is conformable to his essence and perfections, and disapproves and rejects whatever is contrary; or that perfection which determines him to do nothing which is not worthy of himself, and to suffer nothing in his creatures which has not the same character, that is, to prevent it by his grace, or to punish it by his justice."

The holiness of God is commonly represented as a perfection as distinct from the other properties of his nature as wisdom, power, and immutability are from each other. But this I apprehend is a mistake, and has led to the use of words without any precise idea annexed to them. Holiness is a complex term, which does not express a particular attribute, but the general character of God as resulting from his moral attributes. The holiness of a man is not a distinct quality from his virtuous dispositions, but signifies the state of his mind and heart as influenced by these. When we proceed to analyse his holiness, or to shew in what it consists, we say that he is a devout man, a man of integrity, a man of humanity, a man faithful to his engagements, and conscientious in all his relative duties: a man who abhors sin, and abstains from the very appearance of it. The holiness of God is not, and cannot be, something different from the moral excellencies of his nature which were formerly illustrated, but is the general term under which these particulars are comprehended. To call God holy, is to affirm, that he renders to his creatures their due, and governs them by laws adapted to their nature and relations; that he is full of benevolence, and takes pleasure in communicating happiness to the proper objects of his goodness; that he deals sincerely with them, and never amuses them with fallacious hopes, nor terrifies them with imaginary fears. As a just Being, he abhors fraud, robbery, oppression, every infraction of the rights of one man by another, and every attempt to deprive him of his due; as a good Being, he abhors selfishness, hard-heartedness, malignity, cruelty, and all the thoughts, and words, and deeds, which are contrary to charity; as a God of truth, he abhors falsehood, perjury, treachery, calumny, and in short, every species of deceit. As a holy Being, he loves every thing which is conformable to his law, and hates every thing which is contrary to it. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."† His nature is pure as that fluid when it issues from its source. Sin is as offensive to him as a disgusting taste is to our palate, or a loathsome object is to our eye. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and he cannot look upon iniquity.‡

Reflection will convince us, that this view of the holiness of God is correct. It may be objected, that it is sometimes distinguished from the moral perfections of which it has been said to be the sum. In particular it is distinguished from justice in the following words: "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."‖ But those who have attended to the nature of Hebrew poetry, know that it consists of parallelisms, or corresponding lines, of which the second, in many cases, conveys the same idea with the first, but in terms somewhat varied. Hence the righteousness or justice of God in the first part of this sentence, is his holiness in the second; and the only difference is, that in the latter a more general term is employed. We cannot go over all the passages in which these terms occur; but it would not be difficult to shew, that the distinction between them is that between a part and the whole. Holiness, then, is the general name for the moral excellence of the Divine nature; and for this reason, I have deferred the consideration of it till I had illustrated its constituent parts, justice, goodness, and truth. Whatever may be resolved into these principles God loves and requires; whatever is contrary to them he hates and forbids. Holiness in men and angels is agreeable to him; between his nature and sin there is an eternal repugnance.

The holiness of God is manifested in his works and dispensations.

It was displayed in the formation of man. He was not only made a living soul, and endowed with intellectual powers, but there was impressed upon him the image of his Maker, consisting in the perfect rectitude of his mind, in the order and harmony of his faculties, in pure and heavenly affections. The ray is bright as the sun from which it emanates; and man, when he came from the hands of his Creator, was resplendent with the glory of his moral excellence. There was not any weakness in his constitution, any irregularity of desire, any proneness to sin, as some blasphemers of the works of God have affirmed. His appetites were not at war with reason, and struggling to get free from the restraints which it imposed: there was a law in his mind, to which all his internal and external movements were conformable. "God made man upright."* The state in which he found himself at his creation, he might have retained. His moral ability was sufficient for all his purposes. He might be tempted, but there was no principle within him which could co-operate with temptation, and facilitate its success; and when he was actually exposed to a trial, his Maker did not abandon him, but upheld in their integrity those powers which fitted him for resistance, and by the due exercise of which he would have triumphed. To suppose that his power was not adequate to his circumstances, or that it was withdrawn or impaired, would be to make God the author of sin. The fall of man was not owing to the want of any thing which God ought to have done for him. He yielded to solicitation, not because his understanding was not sufficiently acute to detect the sophistry of his adversary, or because the sensitive part of his nature was too strong for the rational. His compliance in either of these cases would have been necessary, and therefore not culpable. He yielded because he attended to the temptation alone, and disregarded the considerations which would have counteracted its influence. Man was less than nothing in comparison of God; but he was a point which reflected a beam of the sun, a diamond resplendent with light. Hence he was the crown and glory of this lower world, as angels were of the superior regions. When God had finished his works, they were all perfect, all worthy of their author, and he pronounced them to be good. Sin was known only as a possible evil, which might enter and mar their beauty.

Let us take a view of the law which was given to man at his creation, and we shall be furnished with an additional manifestation of the holiness of God. Its design was to retain him in a state of purity and innocence, by the proposal of such considerations as were calculated to operate upon his rational nature. While

* 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. † 1 John i. 5. ‡ Hab. i. 13. ‖ Ps. cxiv. 17.

* Eccl. vii. 29.

it impressed him with a sense of duty, it stimulated him to obedience by the prospect of reward, and opposed to the temptations which might assail him the fear of punishment. In the placing of man under a law, thus strengthened by promises and threatenings, we see a proof both of God's care of him, and of his regard to holiness, the interests of which he took measures at this early period to promote; for the law, in the language of Theology, was concreated with man; that is, the knowledge of it was communicated to his mind, and a sense of its authority was impressed upon his heart, in the first moment of his existence. He was not suffered to live for a day or an hour without a moral rule; and the first exercise of his faculties was an act of obedience. The holiness of God appears not only in the general design of the law, but also in the nature of its precepts. It is not a code of arbitrary prescriptions, which require minute and cautious attention, but do not improve the heart; it is not a system accommodated to the wishes and inclinations of man, and compensating slight restraints by general indulgence; it is a strict, unvarying rule, enjoining the observance of every thing true, and just, and lovely, and of good report. Its tendency is to produce in us, according to our measure, the same moral excellence which is the glory of our Maker. It is a representation of the holiness of his nature: and when impressed upon the soul, stamps it with his image. He who loves and obeys this law, is an imitator of God.

The purity of the law appears from its forbidding sin in all its modifications, in its most refined as well as in its grossest forms; the taint of the mind, as well as the pollution of the body; the secret approbation of sin, as well as the external act; the transient look of desire, the almost unperceived irregular emotion. While it commands us to place a guard upon the avenues by which temptation might enter, it enjoins the strictest care of the heart; and calls upon us to destroy the seed before it has grown. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy."* Such it has been shewn to be by our Saviour, who came not to promulgate a new law milder and more adapted to the infirmity of human nature, but to free the old and unalterable law from the loose interpretations of corrupt men, who were the professed teachers of religion. He has taught us that nothing less will satisfy its demands than perfect purity; and that in vain do we wash the outside of the cup, if within it be full of uncleanness. This is the law which God has given to mankind. It informs us what he is, and what we ought to be that we may please him. "The statutes of the Lord are right; the commandment of the Lord is pure; the fear of the Lord is clean; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping them there is a great reward."†

If we direct our attention to the dispensations of providence, we shall see farther proofs of the holiness of God, in the moral government which he exercises over mankind, and the means which he employs to maintain the authority of his law. It may be remarked, in the first place, that amidst the ruin of our moral nature by the fall, there remain some fragments of his image; or at least, that conscience continues to lift its voice in favour of the righteousness and goodness of his law, calls men to the performance of their duty, and punishes their sins by remorse and fear. The operations of this faculty, both when it excites him to the cultivation of holiness, and when it renders him uneasy for not obeying its admonitions, are an evidence that man was created a holy being, as the faculty of reason proves that his nature was originally intelligent. I may mention, in the second place, the means which have been employed to give more extensive and commanding authority to conscience. Such were the precepts of morality which were transmitted from age to age by tradition, or which thoughtful and contemplative men in the heathen world discovered, and which with all their imperfections, served in some degree to set bounds to the prevalence of vice. We add, that from time to time God raised up among his favourite people, holy men and prophets who republished his neglected and almost forgotten law, in a manner fitted to arrest the attention of the most inconsiderate, denounced his judgments upon the profane and wicked, and enforced obedience by strong and urgent motives. It is of some importance to take notice, in the next place, of the natural checks which he has placed upon sin, and the natural encouragements which he has held out to the practice of our duty; for in these we clearly perceive his regard to the interests of holiness. As he is the Author of Nature, of the human constitution, and of the state of the world, in which chance has no place, but all events are ordered by his wisdom, we believe that the system of things is subservient to his designs. Now we find, that men cannot commit sin without experiencing internal uneasiness, exposing themselves to reproach and danger, injuring their health, and in some cases involving themselves in temporal ruin. Consequences of an opposite nature result from the performance of duty: they enjoy peace of mind, are loved and honoured, and receive the reward of industry and temperance in health and competence, and in a tranquil old age. In what light can we view this natural order of things, but as a declaration by the Author of nature, that virtue is pleasing, and vice is displeasing to him; that he is the friend of righteousness and the enemy of sin? We may collect his intentions from his works as well as from revelation, and ought confidently to conclude that holiness is the object of his approbation, when we find good connected with the practice, and evil with the neglect of it, in the course of his providence. In a word, the dispensations in which his justice has been revealed, are also manifestations of his holiness, of his infinite abhorrence of sin. Why has he acted, as if his own works were so offensive, that he could not bear to look upon them, and be delighted in destroying what it once gave him pleasure to create? Why did he overwhelm the former earth with the waters of the deluge? Why did he consume cities with a shower of fire and brimstone from the clouds? Why has he called for famine and pestilence to sweep away the human race by thousands? Why does he command the sword to come out of its scabbard, and bathe itself in the blood of the slain? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? The cause is sin; and the design is to remind us, that notwithstanding his usual patience, his detestation of it is undiminished, and will not permit him always to be silent; that the notions which men entertain of him as an easy and indulgent Being are false, and that he is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity.

The holiness of God shines with peculiar lustre in redemption. It has dispelled the cloud which sin had spread over the character of God, and revealed him in all his glory, as the moral Governor of the world. Let me remind you, that one design of this dispensation, was to shew us what human nature originally was, and what it must become, that it may be acceptable to God, and be admitted into his communion. With this view he sent his own Son into the world, in the likeness of sinful flesh, but without the slightest stain of depravity. Upon this man the image of God, with which Adam was adorned, was fully and distinctly impressed, so that all the virtues were exhibited in their highest perfection, and he is the great example to which other men are destined to be conformed. That which was conceived in the womb of the virgin was "a holy thing." The holiness of God was displayed in the

* Rom. vii. 12. † Ps. xix. 8—11.

public approbation of our Saviour by a voice from heaven proclaiming that the Father was well pleased with him; for this testimony was borne to him because he was holy. But let us consider more particularly his death. The immediate design of it was to make atonement for sin; but the ultimate design was the sanctification of men, their restoration to that state of purity from which they had fallen. The means were of the most wonderful and unexpected kind, the substitution, obedience, and sufferings of a divine person, the crucifixion of the Lord of glory; and from them we judge of the importance of the end. We infer that holiness is infinitely acceptable to God, since he resorted to this extraordinary method of manifesting it to the universe, and re-establishing it in our world. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."* By satisfying justice, he removed the obstacle to the gracious exercise of almighty power, for rectifying the disorder of our nature and restoring its primitive beauty. Let us trace the consequences of his death. A new scheme begins to be executed; a new intercourse is opened between heaven and earth; new means are employed; a new agent commences his operations upon the soul. The Holy Ghost, who moved upon the dark abyss and impregnated it with the seeds of life, performs the nobler work of the second creation. Old things pass away, and all things become new. What is the aim of those convictions of sin which he awakens in the conscience, of the spiritual light which he causes to shine into the mind, of his mysterious influence upon the thoughts, and volitions, and feelings; of the comforts with which he refreshes the soul; of his admonitions, and counsels, and reproofs; of his excitements to prayer, and vigilance, and activity; what is the aim of these varied operations, but to produce a gradual assimilation to our Maker; to refine us from moral pollution, that we may finally appear before him, without spot or blemish? He is the regenerating Spirit, and is conducting his plans with a view to the blessed consummation announced in these words of an apostle: "Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."† All the holiness which is found in our degenerate world, proceeds from his inspiration. He will not cease to exert his power till his work is finished; and then man will be fair as in paradise, bright as the angels, and glorious even in the eyes of God himself. Redemption will terminate in the everlasting triumph of holiness. "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."‡

Lastly, It is a proof of the holiness of God, that he has made purity of heart an indispensable qualification for eternal happiness. His grace frees the believer from the guilt of sin; but its pollution continues the object of his abhorrence, and must be removed that men may be admitted into fellowship with him. Hence they are partially sanctified in this world, and at death are made perfect in holiness. Nothing is more injurious to the character of God, than to suppose that the design of the mission of Christ was to repeal the moral law, or to relax the severity of its demands. He endured the curse, and abolished it in respect of believers, but he made no change in the precepts. Their obedience, although imperfect, is indeed acceptable to their heavenly Father; but it is not because a higher degree is not required, but in consideration of the perfect righteousness of the Redeemer, upon which only their title to the divine favour is founded. But infinite as is his merit, and powerful as is his intercession, they avail not to any who continue in sin. He acknowledges none to be his disciples but those who do honour to him as their Lord: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."* The faith with which salvation is connected, is not a mere assent to the doctrines of the gospel, but associates the heart with the understanding, and diffusing a living influence over the powers of the soul, enlists them all in the service of God. Such also is the influence of hope, for he who is possessed of it, "purifies himself even as Christ is pure." It has no place in an unregenerated man; it is a counterfeit, a base imitation of it, with which those are amused who are attached to the pleasures of the world. The beatific vision is promised only to the saints: "The pure in heart shall see God."† In this world there is a mixture of moral good and evil; but heaven, the region of light, is separated by an impassable gulf from the kingdom of darkness: the felicity of its inhabitants will result from their perfection, the order of their faculties, and their exercise upon the noblest objects; in the love of God, and the love of one another: "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."‡ There is no promiscuous admission into heaven; the society is select; the members are fitted for their place and their employment; and when the throne of God is surrounded by millions of angels who have kept their first estate, and of human beings who have been redeemed from corruption by the blood of his Son and the operation of his Spirit, he will once more rejoice in his works, and pronounce them to be good.

I have endeavoured to shew in what sense God is said to be holy, and have produced proofs that this excellence is justly attributed to him.

From this review of his perfections, it appears, that he is an incomprehensible Being; and lost in admiration of his infinite greatness, we are constrained to adopt the words of Zophar the Naamathite: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."‖ His existence we are able to demonstrate by arguments which carry full conviction to our minds; but the manner of it surpasses conception. All creatures had a beginning; but as he always will be, so he always has been. What do we know of a past eternal duration? When we turn our thoughts to this subject, we are confounded. An eternal succession which is past, seems to us to be impossible; and when we speak of an unsuccessive duration, we use words to which we can affix no distinct meaning. We believe that he is present in all places; but we do not believe that his essence is extended, because it is immaterial. Here also our minds are overwhelmed. Presence without extension is inconceivable to us, and in our apprehension, imports the occupation of a certain portion of space. He is omniscient; but while we readily assent to this proposition, we are beset with difficulties, and are utterly incapable of understanding how he can certainly foreknow events which are called contingent, or depend upon the free agency of men. He is almighty; but we can form no idea of creating

* Tit. ii. 14. † 2 Peter iii. 13. ‡ Matt. xiii. 41—43.

* John xv. 14. † Matt. v. 8.
‡ Rev. xxi. 27. xxxii. 14, 15. ‖ Job xi. 7—9.

power,—power which produces something out of nothing. Mysteries present themselves when we are considering all his perfections, even those of which we find a resemblance in ourselves, because there is no proportion between finite and infinite.

The incomprehensibility of the divine nature is not a reason why we should desist from inquiry, and devote our whole attention to other subjects. It would surely be folly to say, 'We cannot acquire perfect knowledge, and we will therefore make no effort to attain it in any degree.' Partial knowledge is beyond all doubt better than ignorance, and in the present case, is of infinite importance. There is no subject which we thoroughly understand. Our senses give us clear notions of external things, and we are conscious that there is a thinking active principle within us; but we have no acquaintance with the essence of either matter or spirit. Yet, although we cannot tell what they are, the knowledge of their properties convinces us of their existence, and suffices for all practical purposes. Shall we say that God is not almighty and omniscient, because we cannot find out his power to perfection, and this knowledge is too wonderful for us? Or shall we disbelieve the moral character of God merely because difficulties occur to us respecting the existence of moral evil, and his concern in sinful actions? Would it be justifiable to neglect and undervalue principles, of the truth of which we have the clearest and most satisfying evidence, and which are capable of being improved to the most important practical purposes, solely because we do not comprehend them in their full extent, and in all their bearings?

But the incomprehensibility of the divine nature should teach us humility, caution, and reverence. When in the course of our investigations, we arrive at a conclusion which astonishes and confounds us, we ought not for this reason to reject it as illegitimate and false; and when revelation informs us of some fact which reason could not have discovered, and by which it is perplexed, it would ill become us to pronounce it to be impossible. It is confessed by all, that we have no knowledge of the essence of the Deity: on what ground then are some men so bold as to affirm, that there can be no distinction in it to which there is nothing analogous in created beings; that its unity is inconsistent with a plurality of persons? The same reflection should silence our objections against any of his perfections or dispensations. Let us not presume to apply our short line to immensity. "Surely," said Agur, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?"*

Between the knowledge of God in this life, and that which will be enjoyed in the state of vision, the difference is great; but as the former should not be undervalued because it is imperfect, the latter should not be magnified beyond the reality. Some Scholastic Doctors have maintained, that although our present knowledge is only apprehensive, as they call it, or partial; yet in the world to come, it will be comprehensive or perfect. It is indeed said, that then "we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known;" but to infer that we shall know God as fully as he knows us, is to be misled by the sound of words, and to disregard the restriction of the sense which the subject necessarily requires. The saints in heaven will see God with the eye of the mind, for he will be always invisible to the bodily eye; will see him more clearly than they could see him by reason and faith, and more extensively than all his works and dispensations had hitherto revealed him; but their minds will not be so enlarged as to be capable of contemplating at once, or in detail, the whole excellence of his nature. To comprehend infinite perfection, they must become infinite themselves. Even in heaven, their knowledge will be partial, and at the same time, their happiness will be complete, because their knowledge will be perfect in this sense, that it will be adequate to the capacity of the subject, although it will not exhaust the fulness of the object. We believe that it will be progressive, and that as their views expand, their blessedness will increase; but it will never reach a limit, beyond which there is nothing to be discovered; and when ages after ages have passed away, he will still be the incomprehensible God.

From the review of the perfections of God, it farther appears, that he is an all-sufficient Being; and this implies, that he is all-sufficient to himself, and all-sufficient to his creatures.

He is all-sufficient to himself. As the first of Beings, he could receive nothing from another, nor be limited by the power of another. Being infinite, he is possessed of all possible perfection. When he existed alone, he was all to himself. His understanding, his love, his energies, found an adequate object in himself. Had he stood in need of any thing external, he could have been independent, and therefore would not have been God. He created all things, and is said to have created them for himself; but it was not that any defect might be supplied by them, but that he might communicate life and happiness to angels and men, and admit them to the contemplation of his glory. He demands the services of his intelligent creatures, whom he has endowed with powers which qualify them for the duties enjoined; but he derives no benefit from their good offices, and all the advantage redounds to themselves. "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats of thy folds." "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof."* With respect to moral duties, which have a greater intrinsic value than sacrifices and gifts, hear how the Scripture speaks: "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?"† He expects glory from his creatures; but is he like a poor mortal, who lives upon the admiration and praise of his fellows? The glory which he requires, is merely the devout acknowledgment of the infinite excellencies which he possessed before there was an eye to behold them, or a tongue to speak of them; and what are the thanksgivings and adoration of ten thousand worlds to him, who pronounces them all to be vanity, and less than nothing? He makes use of instruments and means to accomplish his ends; not, however, from a deficiency of power, but in some cases, to display it more strikingly through the inadequacy of the means, and in all, to maintain the order of the created system, and the dependence which he has established of one thing upon another. He loves his creatures, but there is no mixture of selfishness in his love: He desires their happiness, but it is from benevolence, and not from any respect to his own. An infinitely perfect Being has all his resources in himself. Creatures can give him nothing, because all that they possess is already his; and they can take nothing from him whose existence is necessary and immutable.

God is all-sufficient to his creatures. They live in him, and move in him. His arm sustains, his goodness supplies, and his wisdom guides them. It is owing to his care that the universal system is upheld, and its laws continue to operate for the general good. All the hap-

* Prov. xxx. 2—4,

* Ps. i. 9—12. † Job xxii. 2. 3.

piness which is enjoyed by creatures of different kinds, emanates from his bounty. Happiness of the most common kind, the happiness which is experienced through the medium of the senses, is the fruit of his beneficence. He has created objects to delight the eye, the ear, the smell, and the taste; he gives a relish to life, and crowns it with abundant blessings. The all-sufficiency of God appears in the ample, and I may say, profuse distribution of good. All are furnished with the means of enjoyment; not even the meanest creature is neglected. And this bounty is never exhausted; it is continued from day to day, and from year to year: when a new generation come forward, the store-house of Providence is as well replenished for them, as it was for their predecessors.

The all-sufficiency of God may be considered in relation to man, and to the better part of his nature, the soul. Its true happiness consists in the enjoyment of God. His favor is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life. He is called the "portion of the soul," to intimate that the impressions of his love, the manifestations of his glory, are the chief objects of its desire, and the source of its highest satisfaction. Hence his favor is preferred by the saints to the choicest and most abundant earthly delights. "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."* He who is possessed of this portion, has better reason than the philosopher who had made an important discovery in science, to exclaim in a transport of joy, 'I have found it, I have found it.' He has found that good, of which the wise men of ancient times talked and dreamed, but the nature of which they did not understand; that good which the soul of man was created to enjoy, and for which it feels a thirst that all the waters of creation could not quench; that good which is comprehensive of all good, with which no other is worthy to be compared, after which no other will be desired, and which will continue in every stage of our existence to impart joy ever full and ever new. So satisfied is he who has obtained it, that he envies no man, however prosperous, because he knows no man who has such reason to be happy as himself, but he who has been equally prudent in his choice. He never says to the worldly man, "Oh that my condition were like thine, that I were rich, and crowned with honors as thou art!" but wishing him to share in his blessedness, which admits of being communicated without suffering diminution, he earnestly invites him to become a partaker: "O taste and see that the Lord is good." In the absence of external comforts, in poverty, affliction, and destitution, when no ray of earthly hope breaks the gloom, and all is lost that the heart once loved, and the world still prizes, he is inspired with triumphant joy by the thought of his interest in God: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."† Although heaven and earth were annihilated, and nature presented a universal blank, the christian would not be forlorn. He could say, while surrounded by the dreadful vacuity, "My inheritance is entire. They have perished, but thou, O Lord, shalt endure; they have vanished away, but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth whom I desire besides thee."

The all-sufficiency of God secures the undecaying and never-ending felicity of the saints. An earthly portion is wasted by use; and many a man who spent the former part of his days in abundance, suffers want in old age. Infinite perfection cannot be exhausted. Giving doth not impoverish it, and withholding doth not enrich it. If it be true that the saints will not be stationary in the world to come, their progress will be from good to better and better; an expansion of their noblest faculties, and a perpetual accession of bliss. There is a fountain of living water in heaven, because God is there in the fulness of his love; a fountain which sends forth its pure and refreshing stream unimpaired and uninterrupted in its course. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."*

Lastly, From this review of his perfections, it appears that God is the Sovereign Lord of the universe. No dominion is so absolute as that which is founded on creation. He who might not have made any thing, had a right to make all things according to his own pleasure. In the exercise of his uncontrolled power, he has made some parts of the creation mere inanimate matter, of grosser or more refined texture and distinguished by different qualities, but all inert and unconscious. He has given organization to other parts, and made them susceptible of growth and expansion, but still without life in the proper sense of the term. To others he has given not only organization, but conscious existence, organs of sense and self-motive power. To these he has added in man the gift of reason, and an immortal spirit, by which he is allied to a higher order of beings who are placed in the superior regions. He might have created a world composed of different materials, and peopled it with beings different in form and in qualities. He might have bestowed upon man a less or a greater portion of intellect, and adapted his situation to the change. Over the world which he has created, he sways the sceptre of omnipotence. "I praised and honoured him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"†

A creature, considered simply as such, has no rights. He can demand nothing from his Maker; and in whatever manner he may be treated, has no title to complain. But in speaking of the dominion of God, we ought not to lose sight of his moral perfections. He is just and good, and will not subject his creatures to sufferings without a cause, and punish the innocent as if they were guilty. His own nature sets limits to the exercise of his power. We are under a moral Governor, who will do what is right. But within these limits, there is ample room for the exercise of sovereignty towards men in their present state of depravity. God may assign any condition to any individual. He may bestow good upon one, and inflict evil upon another. He may distribute good and evil in all different proportions. He may place one man in advantageous circumstances, and expose another to difficulties, temptations, and disappointment. He may make one a freeman and another a slave, one noble and another base, one rich and another poor, one healthy and another diseased. He may take away one in infancy, and permit another to live to old age. When we turn to the actual state of things, which is not the effect of chance, but of his over-ruling providence, we observe all these instances of sovereign disposal; and our objections are answered by the question, "Who

* Ps. iv. 6, 7. † Hab. iii. 17, 18.

* Isa. lx. 19, 20. † Dan. iv. 34, 35.

art thou, O man! that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"*

I have endeavoured in the preceding lectures, to demonstrate the existence, and to illustrate the perfections of God. Comparatively little has been said upon a subject so ample, and nothing suitable to its transcendent dignity. Who is worthy to declare the glory of God but himself? yet from the humble thoughts and grovelling language of a mortal, faintly attempting to portray infinitude, you may perceive, that of all beings God is the greatest, and the most wonderful; one of whom we should never think without the deepest awe, and whose approbation it should be the object of our most anxious solicitude to obtain. Wherever we are, this Being is present with us, whether we dwell in the city or in the wilderness; present at the midnight hour when we are shrouded in darkness, and in the secret place to which we have retired from human observation. As he is now a Witness, he will hereafter exercise the office of a Judge, and his sentence will be final and irresistible. He is an enemy more to be dreaded than hosts of men, and legions of devils: he is a friend in whose wisdom and power we shall have a sure resource amidst distresses and perplexities, and in all conditions an immoveable foundation of hope. He is the God of those who believe in his Son; their shield and their exceeding great reward. His infinite perfections are engaged on their side, and are working out their present and future good. Let us look up to him as reconciled through the atonement, and beseech him to regard us with a gracious eye. Let us commit ourselves to his merciful disposal during our transitory existence upon earth; and when the hour of death comes, let us throw ourselves into the arms of his love.

Now unto the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible, the only Wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

LECTURE XXVIII.

ON THE TRINITY.

Meaning and Origin of the term, Trinity—Traces of the Doctrine among the Heathens—Evidences of it in the Old and New Testament.

God is the most wonderful of all beings; and we have proceeded but a short way in our inquiries, when we are compelled, by the mysterious nature of the subject, to exclaim, "Who can by searching find him out? who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" There is some proportion between our conceptions of the most excellent creatures and the objects of thought, because, although exalted above us, they are still finite like ourselves; but of Him who is uncreated, self-existent, and all-perfect, we can obtain only faint and partial glimpses. Of the imperfection of our knowledge, we must have been frequently convinced during the preceding review of the nature and character of our Maker; and it may be, that in not a few instances, when our ideas appear to ourselves to be sublime, they are mean and grovelling in the estimation of such of our fellow-creatures as are possessed of superior understanding; and that our reasonings are erroneous when we are most confident that they amount to demonstration. But we are now to enter upon a subject which, if we may speak of degrees where all is beyond the range of our faculties, is still more incomprehensible than any which has yet engaged our attention. The self-existence of God, his underived, independent, necessary existence, undoubtedly baffles our utmost efforts to conceive it, because there is nothing analogous to it among creatures; but we understand that he does exist, and the fact is established by arguments clear and satisfactory. Of some of his natural, and all his moral perfections, there is a faint resemblance in ourselves; so that we do not use words without meaning when we speak of his power, his knowledge, his goodness, and his justice. We also understand our own words when we speak of his unity, and affirm that there is one Being possessed of all possible perfection, and that there are not, and cannot be more than one. But the next step which we take under the conduct of revelation presents a mystery which astonishes reason, and upon which no exertion of intellect can throw a single ray of light. You remember the story of the philosopher, who being asked, what God is? requested time to consider, and after repeated delays confessed, that the more he meditated the more he was perplexed. We are not surprised that he found it impossible to answer the question, when we reflect that he had no better guide than the light of nature, and besides was embarrassed by the vain and false speculations which abounded among his countrymen. Even revelation, although it has corrected many errors, has not solved all our doubts; nor could it have been possible for any revelation to enable a finite to comprehend an infinite Being. It may even be said to have augmented the difficulty, by at least one discovery so new and strange, that reasoning is useless and presumptuous, and the doctrine can be received only by a humble faith. We are satisfied by the arguments for the unity of God, that there is only one Being who created the heavens and the earth, and is entitled to the religious homage of their inhabitants. But as soon as we open the Bible, a doctrine meets our eye which seems opposed to this primary truth; for while our arguments for the unity are confirmed by its most express declarations, and polytheism is every where condemned, the true God himself is represented as, in some respect, more than one. This at least is the view which we take of many passages; although great efforts have been made to put a different sense upon them. As these efforts shew that this is the apparent sense, the sense which naturally occurs to the reader, for they would have been uncalled for if there had been nothing in the mode of expression which could be construed to imply plurality; so it is remarkable that in this light they have been regarded by the great majority of Christians, and the doctrine of the Trinity has been an article of faith in every age of the church. This single circumstance is a reason for inquiring into the subject. It is surely of some importance to ascertain whether so many wise, and learned, and holy men, who have maintained this doctrine, with the countless thousands of less distinguished individuals who have professed the same faith, were right or wrong in their conclusions. It is a higher consideration, that our conceptions of God should in all things be conformable to the notices which he has given of himself; that if the Scriptures associate in their account of him the ideas of unity and plurality, we are bound to admit the fact, however incapable we may be of understanding it; and that on the hypothesis of such an association, the notion of absolute unity, unity of person as well as of essence, is false, and the Being of whom it is predicated exists only in the imagination. If the Scriptures teach that there are three persons in the Divine Essence, and we believe that there is only one, our God and the God of revelation are not the same.

The doctrine which I am about to illustrate, is thus expressed in our Confession of Faith. "In the unity of the Godhead, there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally pro-

* Rom. ix. 20, 21.

ceeding from the Father and the Son."* The sum of this definition is, that while there is only one Divine nature, there are three subsistences or persons, called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who possess not a similar, but the same numerical essence; and the distinction between them is not merely nominal but real. The term which has been chosen to express this doctrine is Trinity, a compound Latin word, signifying *three in unity*. The Greeks use the word τριας† which serves the purpose; although it does not so explicitly convey the idea of a three-fold distinction in unity, its proper meaning being *numerus ternarius* or *ternio*, the number three. Some think that the word Trinity was first used in a synod which met at Alexandria in the year 317; but others assign to it an earlier date, and give as the author Theophilus of Antioch, who flourished about the year 162. "He was the first," says the translator of Mosheim, "who made use of the word Trinity, to express the distinction of what divines call persons in the Godhead. The Christian church is very little obliged to him for his invention. The use of this and other unscriptural terms, to which men attach either no ideas or false ones, has wounded charity and peace, without promoting truth and knowledge. It has produced heresies of the very worst kind." Reflections of this nature you will meet with in many books: they are apt to gain upon the unexperienced, by an apparent desire to guard the word of God against human corruptions, and to regulate our conceptions and expressions in religion solely by the unerring standard. But beware of being imposed upon. A little attention will convince you, that the principle, admitted in its full extent, would set aside all human explanations of Scripture; and that the real objection is, not to the terms which have been invented to express certain doctrines clearly and concisely, but to the doctrines themselves. This is the true cause of the outcry against τριας, ὁμοουσιος,‡ and other words and phrases which have been employed in stating the articles of faith in opposition to heresies. Had Theophilus invented the doctrine in question, the indignation of this author would have been justifiable, and much stronger language might have been properly used in condemning him; but the contrivance of a convenient term to express what we know to be a scriptural truth, was surely quite harmless, provided that the term was appropriate, and could excite displeasure only in the minds of men who were disaffected to the Trinity itself.

As the Trinity is confessedly a doctrine of revelation, all our arguments for it must be derived from the Scriptures. It is remarkable, however, that some traces of it are to be found among the heathens. These will not prove the doctrine to be true; but they are curious, and if properly authenticated, will lead to the conclusion, that they had been conveyed to them by tradition, for we can account for them in no other way; and consequently, that the Trinity was a doctrine of the primeval religion. Zoroaster, the reformer of the Persian religion, is said to have taught that the first divine Agent created all things by his wisdom and love; "which names," it has been observed, "are so correspondent to the characters of the second and third persons of the Trinity exhibited in the Bible, that we cannot doubt but they must have been derived from some remains of divine revelation, afforded to the patriarchs from the beginning." The Magi maintained that the Deity existed in a first, a second, and a third mind. "The first was super-essential in itself, and the principle of all essence; the second was the filial mind, generated by the first, the Creator of the material world; and the third was the efficient wisdom and power of the other two." The person called Thoth, Theuth, or Hermes Trismegistus, who was celebrated among the Egyptians as the author of their learning and arts, is said to have obtained his title of 'thrice greatest,' chiefly on account of his doctrine concerning the Deity. He held, we are informed, "that there were three principal powers, virtues, or forms in God, and that the name of the ineffable Creator implied one Deity." This was his name, "I am all that will be, is, and was;" and it is the same with Jehovah, which is explained in the New Testament by this periphrasis, "He that was, and is, and is to come."* Among the Romans, I know not whether we should suppose their three principal gods who ruled over all nature, Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, and their triform images, to be vestiges of the primitive doctrine. They are so faint, and so remote from the truth, that it is hardly proper to mention them. There is one passage in the writings of Seneca, which is too remarkable to be passed over. "Believe me," he says, "this is done by him, whoever he was, that formed the universe, whether the Almighty God himself, or the incorporeal Reason," for so the Latins translated λογος,† "which was the artificer of those vast operations," the δημιυργος‡ of the Greeks, and the all-creating Word of the Christians, "or the Divine Spirit, diffused through the least as well as the greatest of all things."‖

It is unnecessary to enumerate all the semblances of this doctrine which have been pointed out in the creeds of different nations. The Cabiri or Mighty Ones of Sanchoniathon might be mentioned. They were three in number, and the name Cabiri is evidently of Hebrew origin. In the book of Job, God is called אל־כבּיר, *El-cabbir*, "the mighty God,"§ and Cabiri or Cabirim is the plural. I shall only add, what has chiefly engaged the attention of critics on this subject, the Platonic Trinity as taught by Plato himself, and more fully by his followers. These philosophers held that there were three principles in the Divine nature, the first το αγαθον,¶ the second ὁ νους** or ὁ λογος, and the third ἡ ψυχη†† corresponding to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. These were all included in the το Θειον, or the Divine nature. Dr. Priestley maintained, in his controversy with Dr. Horsley, "that it was never imagined that the three component members of the Platonic Trinity, are either equal to each other, or strictly speaking, one." To this his antagonist replied, "They are more strictly speaking, one, than any thing in nature of which unity may be predicated. No one of them can be supposed without the other two. The second and third being, the first is necessarily supposed; and the first (Αγαθον) being, the second and third (Νους and ψυχη) must come forth. Concerning their equality, I will not say that the Platonists have spoken with the same accuracy which the Christian Fathers use: but they include the three principles in the Divine nature, in the το Θειον; and this notion implies the same equality which we maintain; at the same time I confess, that the circumstance of their equality was not always strictly adhered to by the younger Platonists."‡‡

* Westminster Confession, chap. ii. § 3.

† *Trias*, the number three, a triad.

‡ *Homoousios*, of the same essence, or substance.

* Rev. i. 8.

† *Logos*, word, or reason.

‡ *Demiourgos*, artificer, maker.

‖ Seneca Consolatio ad Helviam, 8. The whole passage is as follows:—"Id actum est, mihi crede, ab illo, quisquis fuit mator universi fuit, sive ille Deus est potens omnium, sive in corporalis Ratio ingentium operum artifex, sive Divinus Spiritus per omnia maxima ac minima, æquali intentione diffusus, sive fatum et mutabilis causarum inter se cohærentium congeries; id inquam, actum est," &c. "This was done, believe me, by him, whoever he was that formed the universe, whether the omnipotent God, or the incorporeal Reason, the artificer of those vast works, or the Divine Spirit diffused with equal energy through all things, the least as well as the greatest, or fate and the mutable assemblage of co-related causes: [illegible] was done," &c.

§ Job xxxvi. 5.

¶ The good, essential goodness.

** Intelligence, wisdom.

†† Soul.

‡‡ Tracts in controversy with Priestley, p. 247. edit. 1812

We can hardly doubt, that a notion prevailed in the heathen world, not only of a plurality of gods, for this was openly avowed, but of some distinction in the nature of him who was called the Supreme God, and of whom contemplative men entertained more sublime ideas than the vulgar. It is surprising that they should have in any degree approximated to the truth, that they should have obtained a glimpse of the subject; and we cannot wonder at their mistakes and inaccuracies, when we reflect upon their general ignorance relative to religion, and remember that all their knowledge was derived from tradition. The Trinity is, as we have said, a doctrine of pure revelation; it is a secret of the Divine nature of which not a suspicion would have been entertained, if God had not been pleased to disclose it; it is not made manifest, like his existence, and wisdom, and goodness, by the works of creation and providence.

Our first step is to search the Scriptures, with a view to ascertain whether this doctrine is found in them. Let us begin with the Old Testament, in which we may expect to meet with some traces of it at least, if it should not be so clearly revealed as in the New.—Many have considered the plural names of God as an intimation of a plurality of persons in the Godhead. One of these names occurs in the first verse of the Bible. "In the beginning אֱלֹהִים, *Elohim*," literally the *Gods*, "created the heavens and the earth;"* and it is construed with a singular verb בָּרָא, *bara*.† It would be endless to enumerate parallel passages; for in fact this name is rarely used in the singular אֱלוֹהַּ, *Eloah*. It is plural throughout the whole first chapter of Genesis, where it is so often introduced, and in a thousand other places. The singular is not preferred, even when the design is to assert in the most solemn manner the unity of God: "Hear, O Israel, JEHOVAH, *our Elohim*, אֱלֹהֵינוּ, is one JEHOVAH."‡ This is not the only name which assumes the plural form when it is applied to the Supreme Being. "Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him," בְּעֹשָׂיו, *in his Makers*.‖ "For thy Maker is thy husband," בֹּעֲלַיִךְ עֹשָׂיִךְ, *thy Makers is thy husbands*."§ "Remember thy Creator," בּוֹרְאֶיךָ, *thy Creators*, "in the days of thy youth."¶ In places which it would be tedious to cite, God is called אֲדֹנִים, *Adonim* or Lords. Many learned men, however, as Calvin, the two Buxtorfs, and others, have maintained that these names afford no satisfactory proof of a plurality in the Divine essence; and that they are to be accounted for by a peculiarity in the Hebrew language, which expresses in this manner dignity and majesty, a variety of powers, and a multitude of operations. They object, that when אֱלֹהִים *Elohim* in the plural number is applied to God, it cannot always be understood to denote a plurality of persons, because it is used exclusively of one person. "אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵיךָ *Elohim, Eloheiha*, God, thy God hath anointed thee."** This is evidently the Father. "Thy throne, אֱלֹהִים, *Elohim*, O God, is for ever and ever."†† This is spoken of the Son. Now if אֱלֹהִים, *Elohim*, signified the Trinity, it could not be properly used of one Divine person, as distinguished from the other two. It could not be said, the Father is the Trinity, the Son is the Trinity, the Holy Ghost is the Trinity. They object again, that this name, in the plural number, is given to other individuals in whom there is no Trinity or plurality, as to the Golden Calf, and to the heathen gods, Dagon of the Philistines, Ashtaroth of the Sidonians, Chemos of the Moabites, Milcom of the Ammonites. What Trinity or plurality can it denote in these cases? If this holy mystery is implied in it, is it probable that it would have been employed to designate vile and contemptible idols? Farther, if this name is significant of a Trinity of persons, as Jehovah is of unity, propriety would have required, not only that it should be appropriated to God, but that it should have been always expressed in the plural number; whereas in several places it occurs in the singular, when the three persons must be understood. Lastly, it is objected, that while the name is sometimes joined with plural adjectives and verbs where an individual is evidently spoken of, it is also construed with verbs and adjectives singular when the true God is spoken of; and that from all this it appears, that nothing can be inferred but a peculiar idiom of the Hebrew, which admitted the plural and singular indifferently.

To these objections answers have been returned. It has been shown that there is ground to call in question the grammatical rule of the Rabbies, "that substantives of dignity, honor, and dominion, are put in the plural form, although denoting only a singular object, and are joined in agreement with verbs or adjectives in the singular." The plural noun בְּעָלִים, *baghalim*, Lords or Masters, is used to signify the proprietor of an ass or a well, in which case the idea of dignity and majesty is ridiculous. "It is not a little remarkable," it has been said, "that such a circumstance" (the use of the plural noun *Elohim*, to denote the true God) "should exist in the sacred books of a people who were separated from all other nations for this express object, that they should bear a public and continual protest against polytheism; a people whose whole system of religious, political, and domestic usages was calculated, with consummate prudence and wisdom, to be a perpetual preservative from polytheistic notions; a people who are charged by the Eternal God to destroy every statue, structure, and grove that might recall the memory of idolatrous rites, and to extirpate every thing that could be extirpated, which had been associated with idolatry, or might be converted into an instrument of its revival or of its slightest palliation; who were enjoined to abolish every name of city, village, or place, which was compounded with the name of a heathen deity, and to substitute new appellations; who were not even to pronounce those names unless necessity compelled;—is it not, we may well say, a little remarkable that, in the sacred books of such a people, books whose very words, in many cases at least, were selected and dictated by the inspiration of Jehovah, the ordinary name and style of the Only Living and True God should be in a *plural* form? Did some strange and insuperable necessity lie in the way? Was the language so poor, that it could furnish no other term? Or if so, could not the wisdom of inspiration have suggested a new appellative, and have for ever abolished the hazardous word? None of these reasons existed. The language was rich and copious. The names of the Deity in general and constant use were more numerous than in either of the beautiful languages of classical antiquity, or in the most cultivated tongues of modern Europe. Besides "that glorious and fearful name JEHOVAH," the appropriated and unique style of the true God, and besides other unexceptionable terms, there was the *singular* form, *Eloah*, of the very word in question. There was no shadow of necessity, difficulty, or even inducement, for the adoption of a phraseology, which *on Unitarian principles* every candid mind must confess, can with difficulty, if at all, be defended from the charge of pernicious example, and very dangerous tendency."* It cannot be denied, that there is considerable force in these observations; but as the arguments are strong on both sides, it is best to pass over this proof of a plurality in the Godhead, and to proceed to others which are less liable to objection.

* Gen. i. 1. † Created. ‡ Deut. vi. 4. ‖ Psalm cxlix. 2. § Isa. liv. 5. ¶ Eccl. xii. 1. ** Psalm xlv. 7. †† Psalm xlv. 6.

* Dr. Pye Smith's Scripture Testimony to the Messiah, b. ii. ch. iv. § 34.

There are several passages of the Old Testament in which God speaks of himself as more than one: "Let *us* make man in our image, after our likeness." "Behold the man is become as one of *us*." "Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us*?" "Let *us* go down, and there confound their tongue."* They are certainly remarkable, when taken in connexion with the uniform doctrine of Scripture, that there is no God but one. The reasoning which we have lately heard concerning the plural name of God, is applicable here in all its force. If the use of a plural name to denote an individual was a peculiarity of the Hebrew language, it would be understood, and no danger would arise from it; but it is quite a different thing to introduce a person speaking of himself as more than one, using plural pronouns to designate himself. We have no example in Scripture of such phraseology in reference to any being but God, although plural names are used of other individuals; and we are necessarily led to suppose that there is a reason for this usage which does not exist in any other case. God might have accommodated himself to the idiom of the people whom he addressed, and have allowed himself to be called by a plural name; but we cannot conceive him to have spoken of himself in a manner which would suggest the idea of plurality, although it was his express purpose to teach them his unity. Why should he have said, without any cause, "Let *us* make?" Would it not have been as easy, more correct, and better adapted to his design, to say, "Let *me* make?" It is vain to tell us, that on these occasions the Almighty adopted the style of monarchs, who say "We" and "Us." We have no reason to think that this style was known in the days of Moses; there are no examples of it among the nations of antiquity; it seems to be a modern invention. It is vain to pretend that he addressed angels, or included inferior beings. This is a figment of the Jews, so absurd, and even impious, that Christians should have been ashamed to make it their own; and we venture to affirm that not one of them would have done so, had he not been disposed to grasp at any thing which would help him to evade this argument for a plurality of persons in the Godhead.

Another proof has been drawn from the blessing which Aaron was commanded to pronounce upon the children of Israel. "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."† The proof is founded on the three-fold repetition of the name JEHOVAH, and the correspondence of the whole with the Christian benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all."‡

We may put the same construction on the three-fold ascription of holiness to God by the seraphim whom Isaiah saw in the temple:—"Holy, holy, holy is JEHOVAH God of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."‖ We may the more readily refer it to a plurality of persons in the Godhead, when we consider that on this occasion the Lord said, "Who shall go for *us*?" and observe that in the New Testament, the Son and the Spirit are represented as having been concerned in this vision. The Evangelist John says, that Isaiah saw the glory of Christ at this time;§ and Paul, that it was the Holy Ghost who spake these words:—"Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not"¶

The following passages have been considered as giving indications of a plurality of persons: "Then JEHOVAH rained fire and brimstone from JEHOVAH out of heaven." "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by JEHOVAH their God." "Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake."* In all these passages there seems to be a distinct reference to two persons: in the first, to one who from another, or in concurrence with him, destroyed the cities of the plain; in the second, to one who would save the Israelites by the agency of another; in the third, to one who is intreated by Daniel to hear his prayers for the sake of another; and in all these cases, both are spoken of as Divine.

In the forty-fifth Psalm, we find these words addressed by one divine person to another: "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever."† We have the authority of an inspired commentator for saying that the speaker is the Father, and the person spoken to is the Son;‡ and it is worthy of attention, that the Father gives him the appellation of God in a sense in which it never was given to creatures of the highest order. Must we not infer, that, although the Divine nature is one, there is some mysterious distinction in it, by which only such language can be satisfactorily explained?

"Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me;"‖ or more correctly, "the Lord God hath sent me and his Spirit." There is mention made in this passage of three persons, one who sends, and two who are sent. The speaker is God; for he assumes the name, and titles, and works of God, calling himself the First and the Last, the Creator of heaven and earth; but at the same time he says that he was sent by God; not surely sent by himself, for such language would have no meaning, but by a distinct person. That person is represented as having sent also another, who is called his Spirit; which is not a name for an influence, energy, or operation, but for a living intelligent agent, as will afterwards appear when we come to speak of him particularly, and is plain to every candid reader of the Scriptures. It was he who in the beginning moved upon the face of the waters; it was he who garnished the heavens; it was he who spoke by the prophets, and gave them the knoweldge of future events; and to him the Psalmist ascribes the attribute of omnipresence: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"§

In a word, the Messiah is represented as a distinct person from Him who promised to send him, and the Jews never entertained any doubt of his personality. Yet the manner in which he is spoken of, renders it absolutely certain that he was superior to all the prophets, higher than the kings of the earth, and possessed of proper divinity. He is called the Son of God,¶ and if we believe an apostle,** in a sense which excludes all creatures from a claim to the same relation. He is called "the Mighty God,"†† and dignified with the incommunicable name, the name expressive of self-existence, independence, and eternal duration: "In those days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby he shall be called, JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."‡‡ It is remarkable, that in a passage which evidently refers to him, and is applied in the New Testament to the treachery of Judas, it is JEHOVAH who speaks: "And JEHOVAH said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."‖‖

These are some of the notices of the plurality in the

* Gen. i. 26. iii. 22. Isaiah vi. 8. Gen. xi. 7.
† Numb. vi. 24—26. ‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 14.
‖ Isaiah vi. 3. § John xii. 41. ¶ Acts xxviii. 25, 26.

* Gen. xix. 24. Hos. i. 7. Dan. ix. 17. † Ps. xlv. 6.
‡ Heb. i. 8. ‖ Isa. xlviii. 16. § Ps. cxxxix. 7.
¶ Ps. ii. 7. ** Heb. i. 5. †† Isaiah ix. 6.
‡‡ Jer. xxiii. 6. ‖‖ Zech. xi. 13. Matt. xxvii. 9.

Godhead, which we find in the Jewish Scriptures; but we may expect clearer manifestations of the doctrine in the New Testament, which is the completion of the Old. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." In this manner the Evangelist expresses the superiority of the present to the former dispensation.

I proceed to lay before you the evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity, which is furnished by the Christian Scriptures. I begin with the celebrated passage in the fifth chapter of the first Epistle of John, verse 7. "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one."* Three persons are mentioned as distinct witnesses, and at the same time are affirmed to be one; although some think that the apostle refers not to a unity of essence, but of testimony, or that nothing more is meant than that, like the three earthly witnesses, they agree in one. I need not tell you that the genuineness of this passage has been disputed; the controversy is so important, and has engaged so much attention, that none of you can be ignorant of it. It is now generally acknowledged by critics to be spurious; and in doing so, they proceed upon the following grounds. In the first place, it is affirmed by Griesbach, that in no library of Europe does there exist any Greek manuscript in which this verse is found. He qualifies this assertion, however, by referring to one or two manuscripts in which it does appear; and it ought to be observed, that he can be understood to speak only of manuscripts which have been collated, for there are many hundreds which have not been examined. There are three in which it occurs, the Codex Guelpherbytanus, the Codex Ravianus, or Berolinensis, and the Codex Britannicus, or Montfortianus, or Dublinensis, for it is known by all these names. But they are of no authority. The first is a manuscript of the seventeenth century, for it contains the Latin translation of Beza; the second is a transcript of the Complutensian edition of the New Testament, with some various readings from Stephen's third edition, and cannot therefore be older than the sixteenth century; and the last was written, according to some, in the twelfth or thirteenth century, or according to others, in the fifteenth or sixteenth. It is therefore of very little value, and its testimony is as nothing when opposed to the silence of all other manuscripts. In the second place, it was not admitted into the earliest printed editions of Erasmus, nor into the version of Luther. It first appeared in the edition of Complutum, and is said to have been translated from Latin into Greek; from that edition it was afterwards adopted by Erasmus, and thence found its way into the editions of Stephens and Beza, and last of all into the Elzevir edition of A. D. 1624, after which all our common editions are printed. In the third place, the verse is omitted by all the Greek Fathers, although they quote the words which precede and follow it, collect proofs of the Trinity from all quarters, and even apply to this subject the next verse concerning the earthly witnesses, endeavouring to deduce from it and the context the divinity of the Spirit. Two or three passages have been produced which seem to refer to this text; but they are supposed to be taken from ecclesiastical formularies, or the technical language of the church; and although it were certain that they are quotations, nothing more could be justly inferred, than that in the days of the authors the text was not altogether unknown, but was generally considered as spurious, and hence, with an exception or two, no person appealed to it. In the fourth place, it was wanting in the ancient versions, the Syriac, the Arabic, the Coptic, the Ethiopic, the Armenian, the Sahidic, and the Slavonic. It was wanting originally in all these, although it now appears in some of them, having been inserted by modern editors; but this interpolation does not weaken the argument in the slightest degree. It was not in the copies from which those translations were made; and some of them are of very high antiquity. We must except the Latin version, in most manuscripts of which the text is found, but not in them all. It is wanting in all the manuscripts written before the ninth century, and in most of those which are ancient though posterior to that date. Where it has found a place, it stands on the margin, or is interlined by a different hand; or if originally belonging to the text, it differs in words and position in different manuscripts. In a word, it is omitted by several of the Latin Fathers on occasions when it would have been pertinent to their design, and they might have been expected to quote it. But on the other hand, it is cited by many of them, who seem to have entertained no doubt of its genuineness. This, however, only proves, that it was in their copies; but we should remember, that they used a translation, which might be interpolated; and they cannot be admitted as witnesses of equal authority with the Greek Fathers, who knew and quoted from the original.

For the reasons now stated, the verse is considered by most learned men to be an interpolation, and accordingly is excluded from the text in the edition of Griesbach. There are some however, who are disposed to think it genuine on the ground, not only of its being quoted, perhaps by one or two of the Greek, and by so many of the Latin Fathers, but because it appears to them that there is internal evidence in its favour. It seems necessary to complete the sense, by giving the witnesses in heaven as well as the witnesses on earth. Two arguments are founded on the grammatical construction. If we leave out the disputed passage, and read only—"There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood," we have τρεις οι μαρτυρουντες* in the masculine gender, agreeing with three neuter nouns, το πνευμα, το ὑδωρ, και το αἱμα,† contrary to one of the common rules of syntax; while concord is preserved, if we admit after them, ὁ πατηρ, ὁ λογος, και το ἁγιον πνευμα,‡ because the first and second are masculine, and the adjectives or participles agreeing with them must be of the same gender. It may be objected, that the same difficulty occurs, if we retain the disputed passage; for the apostle repeats τρεις οι μαρτυρουντες, before το πνευμα, το ὑδωρ, και το αἱμα. It is replied, that if τρεις and μαρτυρουντες were first used with ὁ πατηρ and ὁ λογος, they might be used again in the next verse although the nouns in concord were neuter, without any violation of syntax, according to the figure called *attraction*, which made them agree with the nouns which preceded, instead of those which followed; whereas, when the passage is corrected by the omission of the seventh verse, τρεις and μαρτυρουντες are ungrammatical, there being no masculine nouns with which they may be construed. To take away the force of this argument, it has been said, that the nouns πνευμα, ὑδωρ, and αἱμα are personified, being represented as witnesses, and consequently, that τρεις and μαρτυρουντες are properly used, as they refer not to their gender but to their import. Another argument, or rather doubt, arises from the use of the article in the end of the verse which speaks of the earthly witnesses, και οι τρεις εις το ἑν εισιν.‖ The article, according to the laws of the Greek language, refers to a former mention of the subject, and could be easily accounted for, if the seventh verse were genuine; but if it be rejected, there is a reference in the article, but no antecedent. If ἑν in the seventh verse be excluded, we cannot understand how it appears for the first time, accompanied with the article το.

* 1 John ii. 8.

* The three that bear witness.
† The spirit, the water, and the blood.
‡ The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.
‖ And these three agree in one.

The doubt has been proposed by Dr. Middleton, who concludes by saying:—"I am not ignorant, that in the rejection of the controverted passage, learned and good men are now, for the most part, agreed; and I contemplate with admiration and delight the gigantic exertions of intellect, which have established this acquiescence; the objection, however, which has given rise to this discussion, I could not consistently with my plan suppress. On the whole, I am led to suspect, that though so much labour and critical acuteness have been bestowed on these celebrated verses, more is yet to be done, before the mystery in which they are involved can be wholly developed."* It is evident, that in the present state of the controversy respecting this text, we can make no use of it, to prove the doctrine of the Trinity.

The transaction at our Savior's baptism has been appealed to as a proof of the Trinity, because the three persons were then manifested; the Son who came to be baptized, the Holy Ghost who descended like a dove and lighted upon him, and the Father who spoke with an audible voice. But before this proof could be admitted, we must know who Christ was, and what was the import of the title, Son, by which he was designated, and likewise who the Spirit was, and whether the emblem signified a person or an influence. This information is gathered from other passages; and therefore the transaction itself is not a proper proof of a Trinity in the Godhead, although it may be an illustration of it.

A more satisfactory argument is founded upon the institution of baptism, and the form of administration:—"Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."† Baptism is a religious ordinance, which it would be contrary to all our ideas of religion derived from reason and Scripture, to suppose administered in any name but that of the object of worship. It is a dedication to the service of God; and according to the Unitarian hypothesis, we are dedicated at the same time to the Creator and to two of his creatures, or to a man like ourselves, and a Divine influence or operation! The initiatory rite of Christianity is evidently intended to teach us, that while there is one God, there are three persons of equal dignity and authority, who are severally concerned in the work of our salvation, and to whose glory we are bound to consecrate our bodies and our souls.

Another proof of a Trinity is furnished by the apostolical benediction. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."‡ This is evidently a prayer, which it would be impiety and idolatry to address to any other but God. Yet three persons are distinctly addressed, and consequently are recognized as possessed of Divine perfections; as knowing our wants and hearing our requests, and able to do what we ask; as the foundation of all the blessedness implied in the terms, grace, love, and communion.

The Book of Revelation commences with these words:—"Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before the throne; and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness."‖ This also is a prayer to the Father and the Son. But who is meant by the seven Spirits? I presume that no Protestant will say that they are created spirits. There is reason to believe, that agreeably to a Hebrew idiom which uses the number seven to express what is perfect, the seven Spirits before the throne signify the Holy Spirit in the fulness and variety of his gifts and influences; and if so, all the three persons are acknowledged to be Divine, separately and conjunctly the object of worship, the source of grace and peace, of spiritual and heavenly blessings.

I shall quote only one passage more. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."* The subject of discourse is the dispensation of grace, in which there are three distinct agents, obviously exercising equal authority, the Spirit, the Lord, and God or the Father.

There is a general argument, upon which I cannot enter fully at present, lest I should anticipate what will be more properly introduced in another place. It is this, that in the New Testament, two persons besides the Father are mentioned in innumerable places, and mentioned in such terms as elevate them above the condition of creatures, and import their proper Divinity. Not only is the one called the Son, and the other the Spirit of the Father, to denote their intimate relation to him, but both receive the names of God and Lord without qualification, are invested with Divine attributes, have works ascribed to them which finite power could not have performed, and as we have seen, are conjoined with the Father as objects of religious worship and obedience. Shall we say that the sacred writers have indulged in a figurative and ornamented style; that instead of words of truth and soberness, they have given us highly coloured descriptions, and that too in treating a subject of the greatest importance, which demanded the utmost precision of sentiment and expression? They may say so who deny their inspiration, and looking upon them as common men, do not hesitate to accuse them of prejudices, mistakes, and illogical reasoning. But if we believe that they were moved by the Holy Ghost, we will also believe that they were in no danger of being misled by imagination, but rigidly adhered to the simple truth; and that if they had felt any inclination to wander into the regions of fancy, it would have been controlled. They have represented two persons besides the Father as Divine; and as, at the same time, they maintain the unity of God, the necessary inference is, that in their judgment this unity is consistent with personal distinctions. In other words, they have taught the doctrine of the Trinity.

LECTURE XXVI.

ON THE TRINITY.

Particular Statement of the Doctrine of the Trinity—The Unity of the Divine Essence—Distinctions between the Persons—Opinions respecting a Subordination of Persons considered—Nature of the Sonship—Heresies opposed to this Doctrine: Sabellianism; Arianism; Tritheism—Notice of some Objections.

I have already stated the doctrine in the words of our Confession of Faith, which it is unnecessary to repeat. I shall add in this place the words of the Athanasian Creed, after observing, that it was composed long after the age of Athanasius, but goes under his name because it is understood to teach the doctrine, which he held and strenuously maintained against the heretics of his time, and particularly the Arians, who were then the predominant party. It has been ascribed to Vigilius, an African Bishop in the sixth century, or to Hilary of Arles in France in A. D. 450. "The Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance: for there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the

* Middleton on the Greek article, p. 652. edit. 1808.
† Matt. xxviii. 19. ‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 14. ‖ Rev. i. 4, 5.

* Cor. xii. 4—6.

Holy Ghost, is all one; the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal."—"The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise, the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord; and yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For, like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the Catholic religion to say that there be three Gods, or three Lords."

In the first place, we assert that there is only one essence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that they have the same *numerical*, and not merely the same *specific* essence. It may be proper to explain the difference between these two words as they are used in speaking of this subject. Numerical signifies one in number, and specific, of the same species. When we say that the essence is numerically one, we mean that the same essence belongs to all the persons in common; but were we to attribute to them the same specific essence, we should mean nothing more than what we affirm of three men, when we say that they have all a nature of the same species, or are all partakers of human nature. In the former case, we maintain that there is only one God, although there are more Divine persons than one; in the latter, we should maintain that there are three Gods. To express the unity of the essence, the word ὁμοουσιος* was employed by the Council of Nice, A. D. 325, and the Son was declared to be ὁμοουσιος or consubstantial with the Father. It had been used in the same sense by some writers before the meeting of the Council. It is remarkable, however, that it had been rejected by the Council of Antioch, A. D. 263, on account of the inference which Paul of Samosata pretended to draw from it, namely, that if Christ and the Spirit were consubstantial with the Father, it followed that there were three substances, one prior and two posterior derived from it. To guard against this inference, the Council declared that the Son was not ὁμοουσιος τω Πατρι.† Paul seems to have explained the term as signifying *specific*, or *of the same species*; and it is certain that this sense had sometimes been given to it. Thus Aristotle calls the stars ὁμοουσια, meaning that they were all of the same nature. But in the Creed of Nice it is expressive of unity of essence, and was adopted after considerable discussion, as proper to be opposed to the Arians, who affirmed that the essence of the Son was different and separate from that of the Father. Thus the unity of substance was established as an article of faith in the Catholic church; and the doctrine was confirmed by subsequent councils. The Council of Constantinople, A. D. 381, says in an epistle addressed to the bishops assembled in Rome: —"The faith of the Nicene fathers ought to be approved by us, and by you, and by all who do not pervert the word of truth, which is the most ancient, and is agreeable to our baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, namely, that there is one divinity, power, and essence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that they have equal dignity and co-eternal dominion, and that they co-exist in three perfect hypostases or persons."

In the second place, we assert that in this one essence there is a three-fold distinction, which we express by saying, that there are three persons. This word is derived from the Latin term *persona*, but the Greeks used υποστασις and προσωπον.‡ The first occurs in the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the Son is called χαρακτηρ υποστασεως‖ of the Father.§ In our version it is rendered *person*, but some think that it should be translated *substance*. We might ask them in what sense Christ could be the image of the Father's substance, unless his own substance were different? and then we must concur with the Arians, who objected to the term ὁμοουσιος, but were willing to admit ὁμοιουσιος, *of a similar substance*, and might plead the authority of the apostle. He who is the image of another's substance, does not certainly possess that substance, and is therefore a separate being. Necessity seems to require, that whatever may have been the original meaning of ὑποστασις, it should here be translated *person*. At the same time, it must be acknowledged, that it was understood by many of the ancients to signify *substance*. It was frequently used in the sense of ουσια or *essence*; and the application of it to designate a distinction in the Godhead was objected to, as leading to the unscriptural conclusion of three substances, and consequently three Gods. The objection was made by some of the Greeks, and by the Latins, who translated ὑποστασις, *substantia*. Still, however, the word was retained to express a distinction in the one Divine nature, and the use afterwards became general. The Synod of Alexandria, A. D. 362; decreed, "that any person was at liberty to maintain, that there was only one hypostasis in the Godhead, provided that a three-fold distinction in it was preserved, or to maintain that there were three hypostases, provided that only one substance was meant." The Greeks employed another term to denote this distinction. Προσωπον properly signifies *the face*, and occurs in this sense in several passages, as τοτε δε προσωπον προς προσωπον, "but then face to face."* But it is used also both in the New Testament, and by profane writers, to signify *a person*, and hence was preferred by some to ὑποστασις as less ambiguous. "When we speak of God," says Gregory Nazianzen, "we are surrounded with a light which is one and three-fold; three-fold in respect of the properties, or the ὑποστασεις,† if any one chooses to use this term, or the προσωπα.‡ for we do not contend about the names if they agree in meaning; but one in respect of the essence or divinity."

In the common acceptation of *person*, it denotes a separate and independent being, whose existence and actions have no necessary connexion with the existence and actions of any other being. It has been defined to be a thinking substance which can act by itself, or an intelligent agent who is neither a part of, nor sustained by another. We must be cautious in transferring to the Deity, definitions which originate in the state and circumstances of created beings. The cases are totally dissimilar. Three human persons have the same specific nature, but three Divine persons have the same numerical nature. Antitrinitarians affirm, that by holding three Divine persons we necessarily make three Gods, because they most unfairly maintain, in the face of our solemn protestations, that we affix the same idea to the word person, which it bears when used in reference to men. But we deny that it has this meaning. We do not teach, that there are three distinct essences mysteriously conjoined; That the Father, the Son, and the Spirit possess, each of them separately from the others, a Divine nature, and Divine perfections. What we believe is this, that there is a distinction in the Godhead, to which there is nothing similar in creatures, who are one in every sense of the term; and we employ the word person, to express that distinction. It may be objectionable, because being applied to other beings, it is apt to suggest an idea which is inconsistent with the unity of God; but this is the unavoidable consequence of the imperfection of human language; and we endeavour to guard against the abuse by declaring that, in this application, it must be qualified so as to exclude a separate existence. We must cease to speak of God, if we wait till we find terms and phrases

* Of the same substance.
† Consubstantial with the Father.
‡ *Personality* and *Person*.
‖ "The express image of the Person." § Heb. i. 3.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.
† Personalities, or personal subsistencies. ‡ Persons.

adequate to the subject. We are obliged to take common words, and if they are not exactly suitable to the subject, we are surely at liberty to define them, to fix the sense in which we intend to make use of them, to enlarge or restrict it as the case shall require. Now when we say that there are three persons in the Godhead, the word person, signifies a distinction which we do not pretend to explain, but which does not intrench upon the unity of essence. I shall quote a few sentences from a recent work on the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ, by Professor Stuart of Andover in America. "What, you will doubtless ask, is that distinction in the Godhead, which the word *person* is meant to designate? I answer without hesitation, that I do not know. The *fact* that a distinction exists, is what we aver: the definition of that distinction is what I shall by no means attempt. By what shall I, or can I, define it? What simile drawn from created objects, which are necessarily derived and dependent, can illustrate the mode of existence in that Being, who is underived, independent, unchangeable, infinite, eternal? I confess myself unable to advance a single step here in explaining what the distinction is. *I receive the fact that it exists, simply because I believe that the Scriptures reveal the* FACT. And if the Scriptures do reveal the fact, that there are three *persons* in the Godhead; that there is a distinction which affords ground for the appellations of Father, Son and Holy Ghost; which lays the foundation for the application of the personal pronouns *I, thou, he;* which renders it proper to speak of *sending and being sent;* of Christ *being with God, being in his bosom,* and other things of the like nature; and yet, that the Divine nature belongs to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; then it is, like every other fact revealed, to be received simply on the credit of Divine revelation."*

Some have attempted to give us an idea of this distinction, but the success of the experiment is extremely questionable. Dr. Chauncey, a celebrated divine of the last century, proposes this question, "How may this great mystery be a little illustrated to our understandings, so as to have a glimpse of a little part of it?" and gives the following answer:—"The first Being living a most perfect life of fruition in communion, and being but one infinitely pure act, doth most transcendently comprehend and conceive himself, beholding his own most glorious image by his infinite understanding, reflecting on himself as the chiefest good, which he enjoys in the highest mutual love and delight." This, I confess, is not very intelligible; but he goes on:—"God reflecting upon and conceiving himself, is God in the person of the Father; God conceived as his own most glorious image, is God in the person of the Son; God enjoying himself as his own chiefest good in relation of Father and Son, with ineffable love and delight, is the third person, the Holy Ghost." It is surprising that this worthy man did not perceive that this is a metaphysical Trinity, for the Son is an idea, and the Spirit is joy or love. There is no other distinction here than what exists between the mind and its thoughts and emotions. There is nothing which corresponds to personality. I presume that no man will be made wiser by this pretended explanation, which tends rather to confound, and to make us think, that if this is really the Trinity of the Scriptures, it amounts to nothing, and God is still one in every sense of the term. Such is the fate of attempts to go beyond our limit, to intrude into things which we have not seen. We are either utterly lost, and amused with words in the room of ideas, or we are involved in obscurity and heresy. Dr. Chauncey is not the only person who has been led away by this strange speculation. It is as ancient as the days of the Fathers, and has been adopted by persons of high name in modern times. Dr. Horsley, who in learning and talent had few equals, has pursued it, as we see from the manner in which he states the sentiments of Athenagoras:—"The Logos hath existed from eternity in union with the Father; 'because God, being eternally rational, ever had the Logos in himself.' The sense is, that the personal subsistence of a Divine Logos is implied in the very idea of a God. And the argument rests on a principle which was common to all the Platonic fathers, and *seems to be founded in Scripture*, that the existence of the Son flows necessarily from the Divine Intellect exerted on itself, from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections. But as the Father ever was, his perfections have ever been, and his intellect hath been ever active. But perfections which have ever been, the ever active Intellect must ever have contemplated; and the contemplation which hath ever been, must ever have been accompanied with its just effect, the personal existence of the Son."* This fanciful theory, for it deserves no better name, has found patrons and advocates among Protestants and Papists, and among the latter has received the sanction of the Church.†

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are persons, and are distinguished from each other by their personal properties. Divine perfections are common to them all, eternity, immutability, power, wisdom and goodness; but a personal property is something peculiar to each, something which may be affirmed of one, but cannot be affirmed of the other two. The appellations Father and Son, imply a relation between the persons. That a relation is also implied in the designation of the third person is not so certain, unless we suppose, that the word πνευμα signifies also *air in motion* or *breath*, it refers to his procession, from the Father according to the Greeks, or from the Father and the Son according to the Latins. This, however, is a faint and doubtful analogy. By those relations the subsistences in the Godhead are distinguished from each other: but in all other respects there is the most perfect similarity. Paternity is the personal property of the first person, filiation of the second, and procession, or as the Schoolmen speak, spiration, of the third. The first person begat the second, the second was begotten of the first, and the third proceeded from both. "The Father," says the Athanasian Creed, "is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding." These properties distinguish the persons of the Trinity, they characterize them individually, so that we can speak of one without speaking, at the same time, of another; but the properties themselves we do not understand. If it should be said, that, in this case, we use words without meaning, the same objection may be made to us when we speak of the self-existence and the immensity of God. We can affix no positive ideas to these terms, but they deny that God had a beginning, and that he is confined to a particular place. The same purpose is served by those personal properties; they enable us to affirm that the Father is not the Son, and that the Holy Spirit is a different person from both.

The persons of the Trinity are farther distinguished by their operations. The Divine nature, indeed, is the common principle of operation in the external works of creation and providence; but revelation gives us some notices of the distinct agency of the persons. Thus, in the beginning the Spirit moved, or exerted his influence, upon the dark and undigested mass which had been produced out of nothing; and from other passages we learn that it was the Son whose omnipotent

* Stuart on the Trinity and Divinity of Christ, in answer to Channing, letter iii.

* Horsley's Tracts in controversy with Dr. Priestley, p. 61. Edit. 1812.

† Ibid. Disquisition fourth.

fiat all things obeyed, for by him the Father made the worlds. The Father is not immediately concerned in any external operation, but exerts his energies by the Son and the Spirit. To this subject, we may refer the words of our Lord concerning the cure which he had wrought on the Sabbath. He justified himself against the charge of having profaned that day, by the plea that all his works were performed in concurrence with his Father: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."* In redemption, the persons are clearly distinguished by offices and works, which are respectively assigned to them. It is said, that the Father sent the Son, but never that the Son sent the Father; that the Son sent the Spirit, but not that the Spirit sent the Son. We find, indeed, the Messiah saying in one of the prophets, "The Lord God and his Spirit have sent me;"† but the proper translation is, "The Lord God hath sent me and his Spirit." It was the Word who was made flesh, the Son who assumed our nature; this act of ineffable condescension is never attributed to the Father or to the Spirit. On the other hand, it was the Father whose voice was heard at his baptism, and on the Mount of Transfiguration, proclaiming him to be his beloved Son; and it was the Spirit who descended in a visible form, and rested upon him. We do not understand how, the nature being one, acts are performed by one person which cannot be ascribed to another; but the fact is stated in the Scriptures, and it is the office of faith to receive its testimony without disputing.

The Father is called the first person, the Son the second, and the Holy Ghost the third. This is the order of their subsistence, and it is pointed out by their internal relations; but beware of thinking that it implies the priority of one to another, in time or in dignity. "In this Trinity," I again quote the words of the Athanasian Creed, "in this Trinity, none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another; but the whole three persons are co-eternal together, and coequal. So that in all things the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped."

Some Trinitarians are of opinion, that three co-ordinate persons would be three Gods, and therefore maintain the subordination of the Son and the Spirit. This subject is discussed at considerable length by Bishop Bull, in his learned work, entitled Defensio Fidei Nicenæ, where he lays down, and supports by the authority of the Fathers, the three following propositions: "First, the Catholic doctors, who lived before and after, have approved the doctrine of the Council of Nice, that the Son is θεος εκ θεου, God of God; for they have all taught with one mouth that the Divine nature and perfections belong to the Father and the Son, not collaterally or co-ordinately, but subordinately; that is, that the Son has the same Divine nature with the Father, but communicated by the Father; so that the Father alone has the Divine nature from himself, or from no other; but the Son from the Father, and that therefore the Father is the fountain, origin, and principle of the Divinity which is in the Son."‡ He goes on to shew that the ancient doctors called the Father αρχη, *the principle* of the Son; meaning by αρχη, *that* from which any thing takes its origin, whether in time or in eternity; that they called him αιτιος or αιτια, the *cause* of the Son; πηγη, or *fountain*, and *auctor*, *author*, a word used by the Latins. "Secondly, the Catholic doctors determined with unanimous consent, that the Father was greater than the Son in respect of his Divinity, not in nature or in any essential perfection which is in the Father and not in the Son; but solely by authority; that is, by origin, since the Son is from the Father, not the Father from the Son."* "Thirdly, the ancient doctors judged, that the doctrine concerning the subordination of the Son to the Father as his origin and principle, was very useful, and evidently necessary to be known, for this reason, that chiefly in this way the divinity of the Son is so asserted, that the unity of God and the divine monarchy are preserved entire; for, although the name and nature of God are common to two, the Father and the Son, yet, since the one is the principle of the other, from whom he is propagated, and that by an interior not an external production, it may be justly said that there is only one God. The ancients believed that the same reason was applicable to the divinity of the Holy Spirit."† But although these views are recommended by the authority of the Fathers, and have been very generally adopted by modern divines, I cannot bring myself to agree with them. It is dangerous to speak of a subordination among the persons of the Trinity, and it is almost impossible to avoid the idea of inferiority in the subordinate persons: It seems also absurd, while we admit at the same time, that the persons equally possess the divine nature and perfections. What puzzles me most of all, is to perceive how subordination is necessary to preserve the unity of God; because it should seem to me that nothing was so calculated to make us doubt the unity as subordination of any kind, and that it is more easily conceived, if all the persons are equal in every respect. The unity is maintained, by excluding the idea of division or separation, and assigning the same numerical essence to all the persons. It occurs to me, that after all this learned talk about communication, origin, principle, fountain and cause, nothing more is meant than what we all acknowledge, that the nature of the Son is the very same with the nature of the Father, which certainly is necessary to preserve the unity; but such terms are unhappily employed to express it. Bishop Horsley, who was of the same opinion with Bishop Bull and the Fathers, might well call the subordination of the Son, mysterious; for a subordination among equal persons, a subordination of one who is truly God, is indeed a mystery, a thing perfectly unintelligible.

What has led so many to maintain the subordination of the Son, is the notion, that the relation, which this name implies, is founded on the communication of the divine essence to him. Hence they object to the application of the term αυτοθεος‡ to the Son, if it mean any thing more than that he is truly God; and they affirm that it is contrary to truth, as well as to the usage of the church, to say that he is αυτοθεος, if the word import that he is God of himself, because he derived his divinity from the Father. This is the doctrine of the Nicene Creed: Πιστευομεν εις ενα κυριον Ιησουν Χριστον τον υιον του θεου γεννηθεντα εκ του πατρος μονογενη, τουτεστιν εκ της ουσιας του πατρος. Θεον εκ θεου, φως εκ φωτος, θεον αληθινον εκ θεου αληθινου.‖

This will be the proper place to introduce some observations on the Sonship of Christ. In modern times, different reasons have been assigned for this appellation, partly by the opponents of his Divinity—with whom we have at present no immediate concern—and partly by some Trinitarians, who think that it is not founded on a natural, but an official, relation to the first person in the Godhead. The motive, I apprehend, by which they have been led to deny his eternal generation, is the difficulty of conceiving any thing, in the Divine nature, analogous to the process which the term denotes in its application to creatures. But the diffi-

* John v. 17, 19. † Isaiah xlviii. 16.
‡ Defensio Fidei Nicenæ, sect. iv. cap. 1.

* Defensio Fidei Nicenæ, sect. iv. cap. 2. † Ibid. cap. 4.
‡ God, of himself.
‖ We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, only begotten, begotten of the Father, that is of the substance of the Father. God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God.

culty is created by themselves, when they take it for granted, from the use of the term, begotten, that it was designed to suggest a resemblance between Divine and human generation. Ought not men to have paused before they drew this inference? Might it not have occurred to them that, as the subjects were so different, the term must have a different meaning? Would it not have been wise, instead of proceeding to explain the one by the other, to have acknowledged that the relation between the Father and the Son was altogether above our comprehension; that the words, *Son* and *begotten*, were intended solely to express a distinction of persons and a mutual relation; and that the only conclusion which we could safely draw from them is, that the second person of the Trinity has the same nature with the first, is his perfect image, and the object of his infinite love? Were human ideas discarded; were we content to believe, without pushing our inquiries into the region of mystery, the eternal generation of the Son would be admitted, provided that sufficient evidence of it were found in the Scriptures.

When God calls our Saviour his own Son, ὁ ἰδιος υἱος, ὁ ἰδιος υἱος, one should think, that sound criticism would require us to believe, that he is his Son as truly as one man is the son of another, although we know not the manner of the relation; his Son literally and not metaphorically, unless it can be shewn that such filiation is impossible, or that the Scriptures have explained it in a different sense. His Sonship, indeed, seems to be founded on his miraculous conception in these words of the angel to the virgin:—"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."* But the common answer, that the "holy thing" or his human nature became the Son of God by its union to his Divine Person, is quite satisfactory, especially if other passages place his Sonship upon a different foundation. I do not think, that his miraculous conception would justify the epithet, only-begotten; because the creation of Adam, although in some respect different, was equally *miraculous*, if this term may be used in reference to an event which took place before the laws of nature began their course; and, on account of it, he also is called the Son of God. Were a man, who had never heard of the controversy relative to the origin of his Sonship, to read such passages as these; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son," he would be surprised, I presume, that it had ever been the subject of dispute. He would say—it is plain that the person who was sent, possessed this character prior to his mission; and would be astonished to be informed by some modern divine, that this was a mistake, for that he was made the Son of God by being sent. It would never enter into any man's mind, when he was told that a king had sent his son to negociate with his enemies, that his son meant only a favourite, or an extraordinary ambassador. If it should be said, that, in this case, the meaning of the word Son is determinate, being ascertained by common usage, I would ask, what makes it less so, when it is applied to our Saviour? Not any thing in the phraseology of Scripture, but the impossibility under which some men labour of conceiving, how God can have a Son by an essential relation. But do not Unitarians, on the same ground, explain away the passages which teach the divinity and atonement of Christ? And how can those Trinitarians condemn them, who make the incomprehensibility of a doctrine an objection against it? I cannot conceive what object they have in view, who admit the Divinity, but deny the natural Sonship of our Saviour, unless it be to get rid of the strange notions about communication of essence and subordination which have prevailed so much; and in this case, like too many disputants, in avoiding one extreme they run into another. Their opinion appears to me to be contrary to the plain and natural meaning of Scripture; and I am disposed to maintain, with the Catholic church in all ages, that the Son was begotten by the Father before all worlds, or is the Son by necessary and eternal generation.

But, while on this point I hold the faith of the church, cannot assent to the common opinion, that the generation of the Son consisted in the communication of the Divine essence and perfections to him; because, although the terms Father and Son indicate a relation analogous to that among men, yet as, in the latter case, it is a relation between two material and separate beings, and in the former, is a relation in the same spiritual essence, the one can throw no light upon the other; and to attempt to illustrate the one by the other, is equally illogical and presumptuous. We can conceive the communication of a material essence, by one material being to another, because it takes place in the generation of animals; but the communication of a spiritual, indivisible, immutable essence is altogether inconceivable, especially when we add, that the supposed communication does not constitute a different being, but takes place in the essence communicating. I have often doubted whether those, who use this language, affix any idea to it. I suspect, that it is retained, partly in deference to the Fathers, who were not always the most accurate in their conceptions, and partly as a convenient mode of seeming to say something upon a subject which we do not understand. I must confess that, to me, it has always been unintelligible. Let us be content with the knowledge of the fact, and with the language of Scripture, which simply tells us, that the Son was begotten by the Father, but does not tell us how he was begotten. If we cannot explain how a plant grows, and an animal is formed, we can much less comprehend this mystery; and were we as modest and diffident as reflection upon our own ignorance should make us, we would regard every attempt to render the subject clearer than the Scriptures have made it, as a new proof that vain man would be wise, though he is born like the wild ass's colt.

To avoid the incomprehensible notion of the communication of essence, and its consequence in making the Son dependent upon the Father, as a stream is dependent upon the fountain which supplies it, some maintain, that the first person of the Trinity did not beget the second as God, but as Son; or did not beget the essence, but the person. This is another attempt to be wise above what is written. I can form no conception of their meaning; I know not what it is to beget a person, as distinct from his essence. It seems to me, that now we have passed from obscurity into the deepest shades of midnight.

The relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father, according to the Greek church, or to the Father and the Son, according to the Latin church, is called *procession*. Although the term is different from generation, we cannot give the reason of the difference, because we do not understand what is meant by either the one or the other. It is called by the Greeks εκπορευσις and εκπεμψις.* Those who think that generation implies the communication of essence, must attach a similar idea to procession. We are content to use the word without pretending to explain it. I shall have occasion to say something more on this subject, when I come to consider the Divinity of the Holy Ghost.

We cannot be surprised that the doctrine of the Trinity, which appears to be inconsistent with the unity of

* Luke i. 35.

* *Ecporeusis*, emanation, or procession: *ecpempsis*, a sending forth.

God, and is so mysterious, should have met with opposition, and that various opinions should have been broached with a view to remove the difficulties with which it is attended, and to reconcile it to the dictates of human reason, which cannot understand how three can be one. In the second century, Praxeas taught, that there was no real distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that the Father, sole Creator of all things, united to himself the human nature of Christ. His followers were called Monarchians, because they denied that there were more persons than one in the Godhead, and Patripassians, because, according to them, it was the Father who suffered on the cross. The same doctrine was taught, about the beginning of the third century, by Noetus; and with some variations, several years after, by Sabellius, an African bishop or presbyter, from whom this heresy has derived the name of Sabellianism. He maintained that God was one person only, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were different aspects or manifestations of the same Being. There was no real Trinity, but God was τριωνυμος,* or had three names. He appeared as the Father at one time, as the Son at another, and as the Holy Ghost at another, as different occasions required. He was the Father as Creator, the Son as Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost as Sanctifier. Praxeas and Noetus affirmed that the Father united himself to the man Jesus Christ; but Sabellius held that an energy or a portion of the Divine nature was communicated to him, and that the Holy Ghost also was a portion of the Father.

The next heresy opposed to the doctrine of the Trinity, is that of Arius and his followers, who acknowledged three distinct persons, but not three equal persons subsisting in one undivided essence. They rejected the word ὁμοουσιος, *consubstantial*, and would go no farther than to admit that the Son was ὁμοιουσιος, *of a like nature* to the Father. While they were not sparing in giving him high sounding titles to avoid public odium, and to impose upon the simple, they maintained that he was a creature, who owed his existence to the will and power of the Father; and they held the same sentiments respecting the Holy Spirit. Arius himself asserted, as Alexander his Bishop informs us, "that the Father was not always Father, but there was a time when he did not sustain this character; that the Logos did not always exist, but was made out of nothing; and that *therefore there was a time when he was not*," διο και ην ποτε, ὁτε ουκ ην. This system has undergone several modifications, but the most celebrated is that of Dr. Clarke in his book on the Trinity. According to him, the Father alone is self-existent and independent, and to him the Scriptures refer when they speak of the one God, or God by way of eminence. The Son has existed with him from the beginning, but is not self-existent, because he derived his being and perfections from the Father. He derived them, too, not necessarily, but by an act of the will and power of the Father. The same account is given of the existence of the Holy Spirit. It is evident, that although he carefully avoids saying that the Son was made out of nothing, it follows from his system that he might not have existed; for, if he was begotten by the will of the Father, and yet not necessarily, the Father might not have willed his existence, and might have remained for ever alone. The difference between Dr. Clarke, and those Trinitarians who explain generation by a communication of essence, is this, that they believe this generation or communication to have been necessary, and consequently, although agreeable to the will of the Father, yet not dependent upon it. Although Dr. Clarke has not explicitly stated, whether or not he considered the essence of the Son and the Spirit to be numerically the same with that of the Father, the train of his reasonings leads us to conclude, that he believed it to be different.

The last heresy opposed to this doctrine is Tritheism, or the doctrine of three Gods. Mention is made of it in the sixth century. It is ascribed to a person called John Ascusnage, a Syrian philosopher; and it was supported by John Philoponus, a philosopher and grammarian of Alexandria. They imagined in the Deity, three natures or substances, equal in all respects, and therefore held in reality that there were three Gods. I find this doctrine revived, or at least proposed as a theory well worthy of attention, in a Calm and Sober Inquiry concerning the possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead, published anonymously in the end of the seventeenth century.* The substance of it is, that the three persons in the Godhead are three distinct uncreated Spirits mysteriously conjoined so as to be one. "There is a spiritual created Being," says the author, "an human soul confessed to be in hypostatical union with the uncreated Spiritual Being of God—in the person of the Son. Why shall it be thought less possible, that three uncreated Spiritual Beings may be in so near an union with each other as to be one God, as that a created spirit (and body too) should be in so near union with one of the persons in the Godhead only, as therewith to be one person? Will it not hereby be much more easily apprehensible, how one of the persons (as the common way of speaking is) should be incarnate, and not the other two? Will not the notion of person itself be much more unexceptionable, when it shall be supposed to have its own individual nature? And why is a natural, eternal union of uncreated natures (with continuing distinction, or without confusion) sufficient unto the unity of the Godhead, less supposable than a temporal contracted union with a created nature (without confusion too) that shall be sufficient to the unity of a person? Will it be any thing more contrary to such simplicity of the Divine nature as is necessarily to be ascribed thereto? or will it be Tritheism, and inconsistent with the acknowledged inviolable unity of the Godhead?" It is unnecessary to examine this passage; but it must be obvious to you all, that the charge of Tritheism, to which it is liable, is not repelled by asserting that the union is so close as to constitute the three natures, one; for three Divine natures, however intimately conjoined in counsel and operation, retain their individuality, and consequently are three Gods.

It would be tedious to enter into a minute detail of the objections to the doctrine of the Trinity, and to give answers to them. I shall content myself with adverting to two or three of a general nature.

First, the great argument of the opponents of this doctrine is, that it is inconsistent with the unity of God, which is so clearly taught in the Scriptures. But, while passages are collected which declare that God is one, it should not be forgotten that there are other passages which point out a plurality of persons, and in particular, give the name of God to the Son, and the Holy Spirit, without qualifying its meaning, and ascribe to them Divine perfections, and Divine works. Hence we are reduced to this alternative, either that the Scriptures contradict themselves, and therefore are not inspired, or that there is some mode of reconciling their different statements, that God is one, and yet is more than one. The only mode of reconciling them is the doctrine which has been illustrated; the doctrine of one Divine essence with personal distinctions. Deny it, and the Bible is one of the strangest books in the world, at perpetual variance with itself, establishing one thing in one page, and another thing in anoth-

* *Trionymos*, three-named.

* The Author was the celebrated non-conformist, John Howe. See the edition of his whole Works by Hunt, 1822, vol. iv.

er, affirming and retracting with the same breath. Admit the doctrine in question, and the appearance of discordance vanishes; the Bible is a consistent, but mysterious, revelation of the incomprehensible JEHOVAH. If you ask what is the nexus, the connecting link of the two doctrines in question? I confess my utter inability to point it out, any farther than by saying that the essence is one; but I add, that my ignorance, or the ignorance of any other man, is not a proof that to harmonize them is impossible, till it is proved that his understanding, or mine, is the measure of truth, or that a thing cannot be unless we perceive how it is.

This leads me to a second objection against the doctrine of the Trinity, that it is contrary to reason; for what can be more repugnant to its clearest dictates, than to affirm that the same Being is one and three? This objection proceeds, in some cases, from a designed, and in others, from an unintentional, misrepresentation of the doctrine. If we should assert that God is one and three in the same respect; that he has one nature and three natures, or one person and three persons, it would be impossible to utter a more palpable contradiction. But when we say that God is one in respect of his essence, but three in respect of some unknown distinction in his essence, I do not see that we can be justly charged with maintaining a contradictory proposition. There is but one God, because there is but one Divine essence; but there may be three distinctions in his essence of which we can form no conception, and to which there is nothing analogous in our nature, or in that of any other creature. Some men do not hesitate to pronounce that this is impossible; but I appeal to you—Who have reason on their side, those who determine what is, or is not, in God by their own ideas, or those who humbly think that the perfect knowledge of an infinite Being is too high for them? As the eye has its prescribed range, and although adequate to the purposes of life, cannot discern objects in the moon and stars; so reason is able to discover the existence of God, but was not intended to scrutinize the mysteries of his nature. To maintain that a doctrine is contrary to reason, because it is above it, is to forget its limited capacity; it is to constitute it the standard of all truths, while it ought to judge of those alone to which its power is commensurate. It is to place God and man upon a level. What man can comprehend, God may possess, but nothing more; no property, no act, no counsel, must be ascribed to him, which man had not previously conceived, or cannot now understand. We comprehend nothing, not the generation of an animal, the growth of a plant, the cohesion of a pebble; and yet there are disputers who cavil at the Trinity, and other dogmas of revelation, because they are not shaped according to the rule and square of reason.

In the last place, it is objected that the doctrine of the Trinity is a speculative point, which has no influence upon practical religion, and is, therefore, unworthy of attention. This senseless cant we often hear in reference to several of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, which the ill-affected endeavour to bring into discredit, by representing them as useless. But from those who so freely indulge in this style, we have a right to demand proof instead of confident assertions. Can they shew that the doctrine of the Trinity is a mere speculation? It serves one good purpose by reminding us of the weakness of our faculties, and thus promoting a spirit of humility. Here is a fact remote from human apprehension, at which reason is confounded, and yet it is true. It increases our reverence for God, as a Being infinitely exalted above our conceptions, to whom none can be compared in heaven or in earth, and the mode of whose existence is enveloped in impenetrable darkness. To these considerations it must be added, that, without the knowledge of this doctrine, it is impossible to understand the grandest of the works of God, Redemption, in which the three persons act distinct and conspicuous parts. We are called to contemplate the love of the Father, the condescension of the Son, and the gracious operations of the Spirit. Redemption is not the work of a solitary agent, but of three, all concurring in the salvation of our perishing race. Hence we owe gratitude to each of the persons of the Godhead distinctly, and are bound to give, to each, the glory to which he is entitled. We are baptized in their name, and consecrated to their service; and our prayers are addressed, not to God absolutely considered, but to the Father, through the Son, and by the assistance of the Holy Ghost. It appears, therefore, that the Christian system of duty is founded upon this doctrine, and that without the belief of it there can be no acceptable religion. So far is it from being useless, that it is the very foundation of practical piety. In a word, this doctrine furnishes an argument for union among the disciples of Christ. Reflecting that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are one in essence, one in love, one in counsel, one in working, how strongly they are incited to cultivate peace, and friendship, and brotherly communion! And then the prayer of their great Master will be answered, "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."*

LECTURE XXX.

ON THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

Introductory Remarks—Observations on the general Language of Scripture respecting Christ—Evidence of his Pre-existence—His Divinity inferred from the ascription to him of the title, God; Instances.

THE result of our observations on the doctrine of the Trinity, is that there are three persons in the Divine essence, or that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are the same in substance, and equal in power and glory. The inference is so obvious as not to require to be pointed out to any person of common capacity, that each of them is truly and properly God; for it is evident from the oneness of their nature, that, in this respect, there can be no difference. If we have succeeded in the proof that a Trinity is revealed in the Scriptures, we might proceed without delay to other subjects; fully assured that he who redeemed us with his blood, and he who is the Author of our holiness and consolation, are not to be ranked among creatures, but are entitled to the same religious honour which, by the consent of all, is due to the Father. But there are various considerations which point out the propriety of suspending our progress, and engaging in a more minute inquiry into the divinity of the Son and the Spirit. The deity of our Saviour will be the subject of this and some other lectures; and I request your attention to the following preliminary remarks.

First, The divinity of Christ is a fundamental article of our religion. No question which may come under our notice is of greater importance and interest than this, whether the founder of Christianity is God or man, the Creator or a creature? It does not relate to a subordinate circumstance, but to the very essence of the religion, and the whole system is affected in whatsoever way it is decided. Those who believe Jesus Christ to be God, and those who maintain that he is only a human being, profess two religions totally different, as it were easy to show by a detail of particulars; they disagree in every thing, even in those articles which both verbally acknowledge, because they

* John xvii. 21.

do not entertain the same views of them, and they hold them upon different grounds. The adversaries of his divinity are more allied to Jews and Mahometans, than to those who are usually denominated Christians; and to give them this name, is a misapplication of it equally gross as it would be to call him a Newtonian, who denied gravitation, or him a Cartesian, who laughed at the doctrine of vortices. Dr. Priestley was highly offended at David Levi, the Jew, for telling him, that when he looked into the New Testament, he clearly saw that Jesus of Nazareth was represented there as God, and that, for this reason, he could not consider the Doctor as a Christian. But Levi was right, and the reply of Priestley, that every man is a Christian who acknowledges Jesus to be the Messiah, was feeble and ineffectual; for the Evangelists and Apostles teach that he was not only the Messiah, but the Son of the Living God.

Secondly, The divinity of Christ is a doctrine of great practical influence. Nothing is more common with some men, than to represent certain doctrines as speculative points, as subjects merely of curious and unprofitable inquiry, with a view to lessen our respect for them, and to prepare the way for the easy reception of the opposite errors. We might say to them, If they are only speculations, why are you so eager to refute them? Why do you not allow us quietly to hold our harmless belief? Their zeal betrays them, and shews that they regard these points as much more important than they find it expedient to confess. But, besides the irreverence and impiety of such language, when used in reference to any thing which is contained in revelation, it is obviously false, although it may produce the intended effect upon such persons as suffer themselves to be imposed upon by confident assertion and vague declamation. No man can call the divinity of Christ a speculative point, who does not use words at random, without attending to their meaning, or whose understanding is raised but a few degrees above that of a child. If Jesus Christ was only a man, it may be our duty to remember his works with admiration, and his benevolent labours for the good of mankind with gratitude; but how feeble are these emotions, in comparison of the high and holy affections which will be excited by the belief of his Godhead! On the supposition that he is God, he is entitled to our supreme regard, to love not inferior in strength to that of which the Father is the object: we ought to repose unreserved and unshaken confidence upon him, committing to his care, for time and eternity, our bodies and our souls; we owe a respect to him which no prophet could claim, and are bound to receive his doctrines upon his own testimony, and to obey his commands solely in consideration of his authority. In a word, upon the question of his divinity it depends, whether we shall honour him with religious worship, or merely with civil respect; for nothing higher is due to the person of a created being, with whatever office he is invested, and with whatever qualifications he is furnished. To a Saviour who is God, we may offer up prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings; but if he is only a man, the worship which he has received from his followers in every age since the days of the apostles is idolatry, and thousands of the best and holiest men whom the world ever saw, have gone down into the grave under the guilt of this damnable sin.

Lastly, the divinity of our Saviour is a controverted point; although admitted by the great body of Christians, it has been impugned by various individuals and sects. It would be tedious to enumerate the opinions respecting the person of Christ, which were propagated in the early ages of the Church. Truth is one, but error is infinite; for, having no fixed standard to regulate its conclusions, it runs into as many wild and fantastic forms as the imaginations and wayward reasonings of men of corrupt minds may devise. The heretics of former times, disputed among themselves concerning the rank and dignity which ought to be assigned to Jesus Christ; but in one thing they all agreed, that he was inferior to the Father, and could be called God only in a subordinate sense. His divinity is still denied by the Jews, who have renounced the faith of their ancestors, and maintain, that as there is one God, so there is but one person in the Godhead. It is denied by Mahometans, who acknowledge him to be a prophet, but nothing more, inferring from the doctrine of the Unity, which they lay down as the fundamental article of their religion, that there is no distinction in the Divine Essence, and that God reigns without an equal or a Son. It is denied by those among ourselves who were formerly called Socinians, from Socinus the founder of their sect, one of the boldest blasphemers that ever appeared, but who now assume the name of Unitarians, to express the nature of their doctrine. It signifies believers in one God, and in this sense they mean it to be understood; but it is unjust and arrogant to appropriate this name to themselves, since they well know that, on this head, our creed is equally precise. Their design is to exhibit Trinitarians as holding a plurality of Gods, although the latter disavow the charge; and to persuade the world, that, of all Christians, they alone adhere to the first principle of natural and revealed religion. But we are all Unitarians, and assent to the truth solemnly inculcated upon the peculiar people, "Hear, O Israel, JEHOVAH thy God is one JEHOVAH." The only condition on which we will agree to call the followers of Socinus exclusively Unitarians is, that the name shall be understood by all parties, to denote believers in only one person in the Godhead. The doctrine of those who lay claim to it is, that Jesus Christ was a mere man, the Son of Joseph and Mary, who was commissioned by God to teach morality, and to reveal clearly a future state, and that, having sealed his testimony with his blood, he rose from the grave to give us the hope of immortality. This is the sum of their Christianity; and as it differs little from what is called Natural Religion, it seems to be a matter of no importance whether a man be a Unitarian or an infidel. There is reason to suspect that this pernicious doctrine has spread beyond the boundaries of the sect by which it is openly avowed: that it has found its way into churches professedly orthodox, and is taught by unprincipled men, who have solemnly pledged themselves to preach a different faith. To these adversaries of our Saviour's Divinity I might add Arians, who allow that he is more than a man, but maintain, that he is a creature, notwithstanding the magnificent titles with which they honour him, and the high functions which they represent him as performing. This sect was once predominant, but it gradually declined, and is now almost extinct. It has still adherents, but they are few in number; the greater part of those who had rejected the proper Deity of Christ, having sunk into the lowest depths of Socinianism.

In opposition to these heresies, we affirm that our Saviour is a Divine Person in the strict sense of the term; that he is God by nature, and not merely by title or office; that in the words of Paul, he is "God over all, blessed for ever." This proposition I shall endeavour to establish. As the Divinity of Christ is a doctrine of pure revelation, unassisted reason can give us no aid, and we must have recourse to the Scriptures for the only evidence by which it can be proved.

Before entering upon the direct proof of this most important truth, I would call your attention to the general language of the Scriptures concerning our Saviour, to which I formerly alluded in speaking of the Trinity. We have heard a Jew affirming, that the impression made upon himself and his brethren by reading the New Testament was, that Jesus is there represent-

ed, as not only greater than a man, but as a Divine Person; and there is no doubt that every individual, who was not pre-occupied with the contrary idea, and thus prepared to explain away the strongest expressions, would rise from the perusal of it with the same conviction. This is virtually confessed by Unitarians, when they are at so much pains to soften terms and phrases, and to put a meaning upon them the most remote imaginable from the obvious import of the words; for their elaborate criticism would be altogether unnecessary, if the sacred writings had not the appearance of teaching the doctrine, which they are so anxious to disprove. It is admitted that the Scriptures often describe our Redeemer as a man; and if this were all, there would be no controversy among christians respecting his person; but it is certain that they give names and titles, and ascribe attributes and operations to him, which are applied to the Supreme Being both in the Old and in the New Testament. Now we demand from our opponents a satisfactory account of this strange phenomenon. If the Evangelists and Apostles knew that he was a man like themselves, why have they indulged in descriptions of his character, calculated to create a very different idea? It is vain to tell us of oriental idioms, and rhetorical figures; because the question recurs, Why did they make use of such figures and idioms in composing books, which were designed to instruct the nations of the west as well as of the east? They could not but be sensible, that such language was fitted to mislead; why did they not avoid it? Did they use words at random? or were they careless of the effect? Not to say that such a supposition sets aside their inspiration, it would farther prove them to have been totally incompetent for the task, which they undertook, of giving to the world the true history of Christ and his religion. One professed object of their writings and their preaching was to reclaim mankind from idolatry; and was it the proper method of gaining this end, to talk of their Master in such a hyperbolical style, as was calculated to make men believe that he is a God, and has actually led thousands and millions into this error; so that, if they have succeeded in abolishing one species of idolatry, by their unguarded manner of expressing themselves they have established another, and the Son of Mary has been, ever since, associated with the Creator of the Universe as the object of religious worship? Unitarians have asserted, that the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ was borrowed from the Platonic philosophy by some of the early Fathers, and introduced under their authority into the church. But instead of resorting to this foreign source, we can account for its adoption in a more simple and natural way. The Fathers themselves tell us that they derived it from the Scriptures, and appeal to them for the proof of it. No person can be at a loss to know where this doctrine, whether true or false, was found. If the immediate followers of our Saviour did not mean to teach it, they have been most unfortunate; for the great body of Christians for eighteen centuries have been fully persuaded that they have taught it; and we ask, what other method they could have taken, what other terms they could have chosen, if it had been really their design to persuade us of his Deity?

According to Unitarians, Jesus Christ was only a prophet. It is admitted that he was superior to Moses; but Moses, it is acknowledged, was next to him, no individual in the long succession of prophets being worthy to be compared with the man by whose ministry the law was given to the Israelites: and by that people he was held in the highest veneration. Yet, in reference to him no such language is used as is frequently applied to our Lord. He is never called the "Son of God," and "God over all;" he is never said to have "created the world," and to "uphold all things by the word of his power." Greatly as the Jews reverenced him, and zealous as they were for his honour, they would have accounted it blasphemy to speak of him in this manner. They never thought of deifying and worshipping him: they regarded him as the greatest of men, but still as merely a man. The reason is obvious. There is not a single sentence in his own writings, or in the other books of the Old Testament, which would lead them to entertain a more exalted idea of him. Why does the New Testament speak so differently? Why does it elevate Jesus, not only above the prophets, to whom it is granted that he was superior, but above angels and all created beings? Why does the style change, when he is the subject? Is it possible to account for the new train of expressions, if he was only a man like Moses, although possessed of higher qualifications? Will this difference, which does not affect his person or nature, justify the inspired writers in portraying him with the prerogatives and attributes of Godhead? It is impossible that any person of judgment and candour can think so. We are unavoidably led to suspect that there is some more substantial reason. In short, we are compelled to this conclusion, either that the Evangelists and Apostles were fools who knew not what they were saying, or that they were verily persuaded that their Master, although a partaker of the same flesh and blood with themselves, possessed a superior nature, to which all perfection belonged. They described him as God, because they believed him to be God; and in this belief they could not be mistaken, because it was founded upon a long and intimate acquaintance with him, and upon information which they had received from himself.

These general observations upon the language of the New Testament, furnish at least, a strong presumption in favour of the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ. The argument, indeed, is conclusive, if the authority of the Sacred writers be admitted in matters of this kind, and it appear that they give such an account of our Saviour, as can be true only on the hypothesis that he is God as well as man. Let us proceed to consider, more particularly, what is their testimony concerning him.

Unitarians maintain, that our Saviour began to be when he was born or was conceived in the womb of his mother, like another man, who prior to that period existed only in the elements of his being. But on looking into the Scriptures, we meet with many passages which obviously imply his pre-existence. I appeal to those texts which represent him as "having come down from heaven," "having come from above," "having come forth from the Father, and come into the world."* "To come into the world," simply denotes being born, and the phrase is used in reference to men in general; but "to come forth from the Father, and come into the world," is different, and implies existence with the Father prior to his birth. Having been first with the Father, he afterwards entered into the habitation or the society of men, not by a change of place, but by the assumption of their nature. We would not tolerate such language from any other person, and should think the man insane who should say, I came forth from God, and am come into the world. It would be natural to ask, How were you with God before you were born? The phrases *coming from above*, and *coming down from heaven*, are determinate; they obviously import, that our Lord had his residence above, or in heaven, before he manifested himself in the flesh. It is acknowledged, that when blessings are said to come from above, nothing more is meant than that God is their Author; and the reason of such phraseology is, that as the Scriptures always speak of a local heaven, it is natural to represent the gifts of his

* John iii. 13, 31; vi. 38; xvi. 28.

bounty as descending from it. But to say that a person came down from heaven, merely because he was a messenger from God, would be apt to mislead us by giving a false idea of his origin, and would not be conformable to the language of Scripture on similar occasions; for we no where find the expression applied to the mission of any other person. It is not said that Moses, or Elijah, or the Baptist, came down from heaven. Since, then, Christ alone is spoken of in this manner, there must be a peculiar reason for it; and what can it be but his prior existence? He has himself settled the meaning by his words to the Jews, who were offended at his calling himself, the living bread that came down from heaven. "What if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"* As we know that he really ascended to heaven there can be no doubt that he really descended from it.

The pre-existence of our Saviour is evidently implied in the phrase "to come in the flesh," which we find in the first epistle of John.† It is not simply expressive of his participation of human nature, but of his assumption of it. It signifies an act by which he became man, and necessarily supposes the possession of another nature by which that act was performed; as, when it is said of a man that he came in state, or came in disguise, it is intimated that he was previously a living agent capable of choice. Let the same expression be used concerning any other person, and see what would follow. Were we told that some one had come in the flesh, preaching a new religion, we should immediately ask, what does this mean? He has come in the flesh; could he have come in any other way? Was it in his power to come without flesh? Might he have appeared as an angel? Does it depend upon men themselves whether they shall be men, or beings of a different order? These questions, which would be perfectly natural in any other case, are proper in the present; and the only satisfactory answer to them is, that Jesus Christ did exist before his incarnation, and had power to take, or not to take, the nature of man. It could not have been said, that he came in the flesh, if, like all other human beings, he had been made man without his consent and without his knowledge.

The next passage to which I shall direct your attention, is in the Gospel of John. "In the beginning was the Word, ὁ λογος, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."‡ The word αρχη, here translated *the beginning*, signifies the commencement of any period or series of actions; but here, I apprehend, it denotes *eternity*, because it appears from the context to have preceded the creation. In the same sense it is used in the eighth chapter of the Proverbs, where wisdom says, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, ere ever the earth was;"‖ according to the Septuagint, ω αρχη προ του την γην ποιησαι.§ It is enough, however, for our present purpose, that the beginning is anterior to the appearance of our Saviour upon earth. That *he* is the λογος, there can be no doubt with any person who reads the following verses, in which the λογος is described as the true light to which John was sent to bear witness, and John was the forerunner of Christ. Unitarians, indeed, give us a view of the passage which would deprive us of an argument from it for the pre-existence of our Lord. According to them, "the beginning" is the commencement of his ministry. In this beginning, he was with God, that is, as the older Socinians said, he was taken up into heaven to be instructed in the will of God; or, as the moderns say, he withdrew from the world to converse with God in retirement. It ought to be observed that the Evangelist affirms, in a solemn manner, and repeats the affirmation, not only that the Word was with God, but that he was or existed; or, in other words, he affirms that Jesus Christ, the Author of the new dispensation, existed at the commencement of that dispensation. An important piece of intelligence truly! which we should not have known, if his beloved disciple and familiar friend had not been pleased to inform us, that Jesus Christ was in being when he began to preach. Can any man believe that an inspired Apostle was guilty of such trifling? Do Unitarian commentators believe it themselves? No; but this perversion of the sense serves the purpose of supporting their favourite doctrine, that our Saviour did not exist till he was born.

Another passage in the Gospel of John is worthy of particular attention. Our Saviour had said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." They said unto him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" He had not asserted that he had seen Abraham, or that Abraham had seen him, but only his day; but his hearers understood him to speak of co-existence with the patriarch; and as this interpretation of his words was just, he confirmed it: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am."* There is a striking peculiarity in these words, and an apparent violation of grammar, the present time being put before the past. The reason may be, that the Speaker, in his Divine nature, exists in a mysterious manner; that time is nothing to him, in whose sight a thousand years are as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night; that in this permanent, unsuccessive duration, there is no distinction of past and future. Be this as it may, the words clearly import, that although our Lord was not fifty years old, and about two thousand years had elapsed since the death of Abraham, he might have seen, and had actually seen him, for he was in existence before the patriarch *was*, *was made*, or *was born*; for in all these ways the verb γινεσθαι has been translated, and any of them expresses its meaning. Strange methods have been employed to evade the evidence of this text. The elder Socinians gave this interpretation: "I am or exist before Abraham is made;" that is, before he, who was originally called Abram a high father, shall become truly Abraham the father of many nations, or before the calling of the Gentiles. Was this an answer to the objection of the Jews? Could it serve any purpose for Christ to affirm with emphasis of himself, what was equally true of every person who heard him? for they all existed before the gospel was preached to the nations of the world. Contemptible as this evasion is, Socinus tells us that his uncle Lælius obtained this view of the text from Christ himself by many prayers. Justly might one of his contemporaries say to him, that never in the course of his life had he met with a more perverted interpretation of Scripture. The modern Socinians give a different comment. 'Before Abraham was, I may be said to have existed as the Messiah, because I was appointed to this office by the Divine decree;' and they have the countenance of Grotius. It seems, then, that things may be said to exist thousands of years before they exist, because God has determined to bring them to pass. I may say that I existed before the flood, and we may all say that we existed from eternity; but it will be wise to refrain from such language, if we wish to escape the charge of folly or insanity. Again I ask, how was this answer to the purpose? What light did it throw upon the subject of discourse? How did it meet the inquiry of the Jews? What did our Lord affirm of himself, which was not true of every other prophet? But taking the words in their plain, natural meaning, they are an answer to the question, Hast

* John vi. 62. † Chap. iv. 2, 3. ‡ Chap. i. 1, 2.
‖ Prov. viii. 23.
§ In the beginning, before the formation of the earth.

* John viii. 56—58.

thou seen Abraham? Yes, I have seen him, for I was before him.

I shall mention only one other passage; "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."* In this passage, our Lord speaks of glory in reference to the future and the past. He refers to the future, when he prays that his Father would now glorify him, that is, after his sufferings; he refers to the past, when he says that he had glory with the Father before the world began. The import of the prayer is, that his original glory might be manifested in a particular manner, or after a temporary obscuration. We have here an answer to an objection, that Christ cannot be conceived to pray for the same state of glory which, on the supposition of his pre-existence, he enjoyed before his humiliation, because it had never been lost. But it had been concealed from the eyes of men by his voluntary abasement, and it would be displayed in a new light, by his exaltation in our nature to the throne of the universe, and by the result of his administration in the perfection and eternal happiness of his people. Unitarians, and some others, have held that this, as well as the former passage, refers to the Divine decrees, and understand "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was," to be the glory which the Father had purposed to confer upon him. But the same reasoning may be opposed to both interpretations. Things future are sometimes represented as present, particularly in the prophetical style; but it is contrary to the laws of language, especially in a narrative of facts, to describe things present, or on the eve of accomplishment, as having taken place many ages before. How would it sound if a good man, who had the hope of immortality, should say, I was glorified in the presence of God, before I or any created being existed? Let us not put words into the mouth of our Saviour which would be extravagant and absurd if uttered by any other person.

The pre-existence of Christ is sufficiently established by the passages quoted; and the Unitarian doctrine of his simple humanity is proved to be unscriptural. But more is necessary to demonstrate his divinity. Arians allow that he existed before his manifestation in human nature, but they do not admit that he is God in the proper sense of the term. The doctrine of the founder of the sect was, that there was a time when Christ was not, and that he was created before all worlds. They have this advantage, that they are not under the necessity of explaining away, by dishonest criticism, many passages which press upon the Unitarian system. They can understand literally those texts which we have considered, and say without equivocation or mental reservation, that Christ was with God in the beginning, and had glory with him before the foundation of the world; that he existed before Abraham; that he came down from heaven, and came in the flesh. Those things, which are affirmed of him, are strictly true according to their system, which is more plausible than that of Socinians, and thus far agrees with the plain meaning of Scripture. It is therefore surprising that so many of its friends should have abandoned it, and adopted the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, which is embarrassed with so many additional difficulties. An Arian can not only go along with the Scriptures, when they assert that our Lord existed before his incarnation, but can give him the high titles which he receives, and ascribe to him the mighty works which are there represented as having been performed by him. He does not hesitate to say that the Son created the world, and appeared to the patriarchs, and governed the Church under the old dispensation; nor to call him the image of the invisible God, and the first-born of every creature, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. He can use such language with a nearer approximation to the truth than a Socinian, who is compelled to fritter it away into mere inanity; to reduce the pompous display of metaphors and similes into humble and creeping sense. Yet the distance between us and Arians is immense. This Being, whom they portray in such magnificent terms, is a creature superior to angels, but alike indebted for his existence to the will and power of the Almighty, a God not by nature, but by office. In the following discussion, therefore, we shall have to contend with them as well as with Unitarians, while we endeavour to prove, in opposition to both, that Jesus Christ is truly and properly a Divine Person, a partaker of the same nature with the Father, and possessed of all his perfections.

In prosecuting this design, I might go over the Scriptures in regular order, selecting such information as they supply with respect to his personal dignity. It would not be necessary to confine your attention to the New Testament, because the Old is a part of the same revelation, and amidst its notices and predictions may be expected to give us some knowledge of his character, as well as of the work which he had undertaken to accomplish. But this method would be tedious, and would require more time than can be allotted to this department of our course. There is a classification of the proofs which we may commodiously adopt, because it is a comprehensive one, and, arranging them under distinct heads, leads the mind, by a clear and successive induction, to the conclusion. Jesus Christ is proved to be God equal to the Father, by the ascription of the same names, and perfections, and works and worship to him.

In the first place, Let us attend to the Divine names which are given to him in the Scriptures. That he is called, God, is so well known, that it is almost superfluous to produce particular passages. Now, it is acknowledged, that the name is sometimes given to creatures, to magistrates and angels; and Moses is said to have been a god to Pharaoh.* In the latter case, the meaning evidently is that Moses was in the room of God to Pharaoh, delivered God's commands to him, and denounced his judgments. The name, as we shall see, is used concerning Christ in a quite different manner. It may be observed, that when creatures are called gods, we are led to a figurative sense, not only by the plural number—which shews that their real divinity cannot be meant, because it is a fundamental doctrine of religion that there is only one—but by some adjunct or circumstance which qualifies the term; whereas in its application to our Saviour, the laws of just reasoning require it to be literally understood. If it is said to earthly princes, "Ye are gods," it is added in the same breath, "but ye shall die like men;"† and when angels are addressed as gods, they are at the same time commanded to acknowledge their inferiority by worshipping the first-begotten of the Father:‡ but the Godhead of our Saviour is expressed in such terms, and associated with such attributes and operations, as demonstrate it to be absolute.

"The Word was God."‖ *He was made a God*, say the Socinians; but the deification of a creature is a notion which receives no countenance from Scripture, and it may be pronounced to be impossible. How was it done? Was a divine nature given to him? or were divine perfections communicated to him? Not a word of these things is to be found in the Bible, and either supposition is grossly absurd. How could a man be changed into a God? or how could a limited nature be endowed with omniscience and omnipotence?

* John xvii. 5.

* Exod. vii. 1. † Ps. lxxxii. 6, 7.
‡ Compare Ps. xcvii. 7. with Heb. i. 6. ‖ John i. 1.

Modern Socinians translate the passage thus, *The word was a God*; but how strange is it to the ears of christians to speak of more Gods than one, as if, like the heathens, we had subordinate deities! No; they say, our meaning is that he is a figurative god, like magistrates and Moses. Besides that, in the following verses, the Evangelist ascribes to him a work which is peculiar to the true God, namely, the creation of all things,* the original does not admit of this translation. Θεος, they reply, is without the article, and ought therefore to be rendered *a God*. But the idiom of the Greek language is violated, and scholars know, that while the subject of a proposition admits, the predicate rejects, the article, and that the proposition, "The Word was God," could have been expressed only as it is, Θεος ην ὁ λογος. It is evident, that although Θεος stands first in order, it is the predicate of the sentence, and denotes what ὁ λογος, the subject, is. This criticism, then, proves only the ignorance of those who have made it.

"Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."† To evade the evidence of this text, Unitarians tell us that it may be translated, "God is thy throne;" because the words rendered *O God*, are not ω Θεε, in the vocative, but ὁ Θεος, in the nominative. They ought to have remembered, that this is a Greek idiom, and that in the Attic dialect, the nominative is frequently put for the vocative. God is said to be a shield, a rock, and a fortress to his people, and as in these cases it is signified that he protects and defends them, there is nothing inconsistent with his dignity and supremacy. "But it is the reverse in the case before us. A throne," it has been justly remarked, "derives its dignity from the character and dominion of the sovereign who sits upon it. To call the Eternal Majesty the throne of a creature," as the Messiah is supposed to be, "seems little suitable to the reverence which is ever to be maintained towards the Creator, and which is one of the most distinguishing characters of the Scripture style."‡ The design of the Apostle, in quoting these words of the Psalmist, is to prove the superiority of Christ to the heavenly messengers. He begins well, by shewing that God makes the winds his messengers, and flames of fire his ministers, thus reducing angels to the condition of servants; but he does not end well, if he say only that God is the throne of Christ, or the support of his authority. Where is the contrast? If he has given power to our Saviour, and upholds him in the exercise of it, he has done the same thing to angels and other ministers of his will; and how does his pre-eminence appear? If we read, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," the point is decided, for he is God, and they are creatures; but the new translation destroys the force of the argument, and must therefore be false. The ancient versions agree with ours; and as far as I know, the new translation was not thought of till modern times, when arguments against the divinity of Christ were eagerly sought and collected from every quarter. We may rest satisfied that this is another passage in which our Saviour is called, God, in the proper sense of the term.

The Apostle Paul, when enumerating the privileges and honours of the Jews, thus expresses the last and greatest of them:—"And of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is God over all, blessed for ever. Amen."‖ This single passage furnishes a decisive answer to the question respecting the divinity of our Saviour. The adversaries of this doctrine, fully aware that it is fatal to their system, have tried every possible method of destroying its force. "Of whom Christ came," ὁ ων επι παντων Θεος.§ Ὁ ων connects Θεος with Χριστος, and is used for ος εστι. To evade this evidence that he is God, they have proposed a different reading, ὁν ὁ—*of whom*, namely, the Jews, *is God over all*; that is, he is their God. But besides that, if this were the genuine reading, the article must, by the laws of the language, have been prefixed to ευλογητος, (ὁν ὁ επι παντων Θεος ὁ ευλογητος*) which it is not; the alteration is made without the authority of a single manuscript, in order to silence the testimony of Scripture in favor of a particular doctrine. It is a mere conjecture, which Griesbach has mentioned among his various readings, while it would have been more worthy of him to have passed it over with contempt. We have said more than enough of it, and proceed to another attempt to annihilate the evidence, by converting the words into a doxology; as if the Apostle, while reviewing the instances of divine goodness to his nation, had felt the spirit of devotion arise, and burst forth into an expression of praise, "God over all be blessed for ever!" It is an overwhelming objection, that the words cannot be so translated without a violation of the idiom of the language. In all the doxologies where ευλογητος occurs in the New Testament and in the Septuagint, (and more than forty instances have been observed,) it is placed at the beginning of the sentence. If, then, Paul had intended a doxology, he would have said, ευλογητος ὁ ων επι παντων Θεος εις τους αιωνας.† As he has placed the words in a different order, they are plainly and necessarily an affirmation concerning the person last spoken of, namely Christ, who is pronounced to be God. And you will observe, that there is no room for the pretext which is employed in other places, that he may be called God in a figurative and subordinate sense; because he is denominated ὁ Θεος επι παντων, the Supreme God, or the Most High God over all the earth. That he may and ought to be so designated, will be readily admitted by those who believe, and entertain just notions of, the Trinity; for if the nature is the same, the persons must be equal, and one of them cannot be greater than another.

When Jesus shewed the wounds in his hands and his feet, Thomas said unto him, "My Lord, and my God."‡ We are told that this was merely a sudden expression of surprise and admiration. But to use the name of God on such occasions is profane; it is the practice of irreligious men, and would not have been imitated by a follower of Christ in the presence of his Master; or if he had inadvertently fallen into it, he would not have passed without reprehension. We have no evidence from the Scriptures that the Jews indulged in such exclamations, although they are too common among Christians. It has been said again, that they are an ejaculation addressed to the Father, "My Lord, and my God, how great is thy power!" or, "My Lord and my God has done this." We need only reply, that according to the Evangelist the words were not addressed to the Father, but to Christ, "Thomas said unto him," &c. It follows that Christ was acknowledged by Thomas as his Lord and his God; and surely if he had been in an error, his Master would have set him right.

Besides the passages which have been quoted, there are several others in which the name of God is given to our Saviour, but the evidence does not appear to common readers, in consequence of the manner in which they have been translated. It is a rule laid down by some late critics, that when two or more personal or attributive nouns, joined by a copulative or copulatives, are assumed of the same person or thing, before the first attributive the article is inserted, before the remaining ones it is omitted. It follows, that when two or more attributives occur with the article prefixed only to the first, they ought to be understood as referring to the same individual. For example, if we find Χριστος and

* John i. 3. † Heb. i. 8.
‡ Dr. Pye Smith's Scripture Testimony to the Messiah, Book b. c. 4. § 14. ‖ Rom. ix. 5. § Who being (i. e. is) God over all.

* Of whom (is) the blessed God over all.
† Blessed be he who is God over all for ever.
‡ John xx. 28.

Θεος coupled by the conjunction και* and ὁ before Χριστος, but not repeated before Θεος, we must not explain them as referring to two persons but to one, and as asserting that he who is Christ, is also God. This canon has been established by examples from the classics, from the New Testament, and from the Fathers; so that we are fully authorized to apply it for the correction of some passages, in which, in consequence of not attending to it, our translators have misrepresented the sense. Dr. Wordsworth, who has examined the subject with great care, says, "I have observed more, I am persuaded, than a thousand instances of the form ὁ Χριστος και Θεος, some hundreds of instances of ὁ μεγας Θεος και σωτηρ,† and not fewer than several thousands of the form ὁ Θεος και σωτηρ,‡ while in no single case have I seen, where the sense could be determined, any one of them used but only of one person."‖ The Fathers are good authority, as they certainly were acquainted with the idiom of their own language. When the same phrases, therefore, occur in the New Testament, we are bound to understand them as they were understood by the Greeks. On this ground we beg leave to differ from the received version in some texts, and to give a translation more conformable to the original:—"Looking for the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,"§ ought to be, *the appearing of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ*; του μεγαλου Θεου και σωτηρος ἡμων Ιησου Χριστου. "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ,"¶ should be rendered, *according to the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ*; του Θεου ἡμων και Κυριου Ιησου Χριστου. "No whoremonger—hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God,"** *in the kingdom of the Christ and God*; εν τη βασιλεια του Χριστου και Θεου. "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ,"†† *before the God and Lord Jesus Christ*; ἐνωπιον του Θεου και Κυριου Ιησου Χριστου. "Through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ,"‡‡ *through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ*; του Θεου ἡμων και σωτηρος Ιησου Χριστου. "Ungodly men, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ,"‖‖ *denying Jesus Christ the only Lord and our Lord*; τον μονον δεσποτην και κυριον ἡμων Ιησουν Χριστον.

Enough has been said to prove that, according to the New Testament, Christ is God in the true and proper sense of the word. But this is not the only name expressive of his divinity, and in the next Lecture I shall shew that he is also called JEHOVAH.

LECTURE XXXI.

ON THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

Divinity of Christ inferred from the ascription to him of the title Jehovah; Instances—Inferred from the ascription to him of Divine Perfections; as Eternity, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Immutability, and Omnipotence—Inferred from the ascription to him of Divine Works; Instances.

I PROCEED to another name which is given to our Saviour. God revealed himself to his ancient people by the name JEHOVAH, derived from the verb הוה, *to be* or *to subsist*, and therefore signifying *Ens*, *Existens ab æterno et in æternum*, or the self-existent and eternal Being. Its import shews that it cannot be given to a creature, but is appropriated to God; and accordingly he makes an exclusive claim to it in Scripture. As the name of a man distinguishes him from all other men, so the name, JEHOVAH, distinguishes the Most High from all other beings. "Seek ye him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; JEHOVAH is his name."* The Psalmist says, "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most High over all the earth."† These passages are instances of the exclusive ascription of this name to the Creator and Governor of the universe, and prove that it is peculiar to him. I shall, however, add one quotation more, in which he takes it to himself, with a solemn declaration that he will not give it, and consequently that it ought not to be given, to any other: "I am JEHOVAH; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."‡ It implies something in which no other can share: the glory of underived and independent existence belongs to no man or angel.

Now, the argument which we found upon these passages is this, that if this name is given to Jesus Christ, he is not a created or a nominal God, but a divine person, distinct, it is acknowledged, from the Father, but united with him in the same self-existent essence. It is objected, that there are several instances in which this name is given to a creature. To mention one, he who appeared to Moses in the burning bush is called JEHOVAH, and yet is said to have been an angel. But before this passage can be fairly alleged against us, it must be proved that he was a created angel, contrary to the belief of the Church in all ages, that this was the same person who was afterwards manifested in human nature as the Messenger of God, and was then the Guide and Guardian of the peculiar people. It is objected, that Moses called an altar which he had erected JEHOVAH-nissi, *my banner*;‖ and that when the ark was taken up to be removed to another place, he addressed it in these words, "Rise up, JEHOVAH, and let thine enemies be scattered:" when it rested again, he said, "Return, O JEHOVAH, unto the many thousands of Israel."§ But these passages are cited to no purpose, because it will immediately appear, that they are not parallel to those in which our Saviour is described as JEHOVAH. It is evident that inanimate objects could be so called only in a figurative sense, and could be considered in no other light than as memorials of him after whom they are denominated. The altar was not JEHOVAH, but was dedicated to his honour; the ark was merely a symbol of his presence; and Moses addressed his words not to it, but to Him who appeared above it, between the cherubim. We give the same account of the passage in Ezekiel, which says, "The name of the city from that day shall be JEHOVAH is there:"¶ of which the meaning obviously is, that the city shall be the residence of JEHOVAH, who will manifest his presence in it by the operations of his power and grace. The application of the name to our Saviour, suggests totally different ideas. He is a living person, and is throughout the Scriptures represented as possessing the attributes, and performing the works, of God; and hence we are authorised to consider it as applied to him in the true and literal sense of the term. If it is proved that he is God, because he is called God, it will be proved that he is JEHOVAH, if it is found that he is called JEHOVAH without a figure.

In the sixth chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah, we have an account of a vision in which he saw the Lord high and lifted up, and heard the seraphim adoring him:—"Holy, holy, holy is JEHOVAH of Hosts; the

* *Christos—Theos—kai, Christ—God—and.*
† The great God and Saviour. ‡ The God and Saviour.
‖ Six letters to Mr. Granville Sharp, p. 36, &c.
§ Titus ii. 13. ¶ 2 Thess. i. 12. ** Eph. v. 5.
†† 1 Tim. v. 21. ‡‡ 2 Pet. i. 1.
‖‖ Jude 4. The word Θεον, *God*, in our translation of this last verse, is omitted by late critics.

* Amos v. 8. † Ps. lxxxiii. 18. ‡ Isaiah xlii. 8.
‖ Exod. xvii. 15. § Numb. x. 35 36. ¶ Ezek. xlviii. 35.

whole earth is full of his glory."* If we turn to the twelfth chapter of John, we shall find him quoting the words which JEHOVAH addressed to the prophet on the occasion, and then adding, "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."† Whose glory did he see? Christ is the subject of the Evangelist's discourse, and to him only can the pronoun refer. Isaiah therefore saw the glory of Christ, when he saw JEHOVAH in the temple: he saw it, not with the eye of his mind, contemplating future scenes, but with his bodily eyes. Is it not then certain, that Christ is JEHOVAH?

Isaiah xl. 3—"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of JEHOVAH, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Hear what an Evangelist says; "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea."—"For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."‡ To these verses we may join the words of the angel to Zacharias concerning his promised son: "He shall go before him," the Lord God of the children of Israel, "in the spirit and power of Elias, to—make ready a people prepared for the Lord."‖ We see the prophecy, and we see its fulfilment. "The voice crying in the wilderness" was the voice of the Baptist; "the way of JEHOVAH" was prepared by his ministrations, while he excited, in the minds of the people, an expectation of the appearance of the Messiah; and consequently the Messiah is JEHOVAH. The inference is so obvious, that all evasion is vain.

Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, JEHOVAH our Righteousness." It is admitted by Jews and Christians that this is a prediction of the Messiah. Some read, *this is the name which Jehovah shall call him, our Righteousness*; but the most distinguished interpreters contend for our translation; and so it seems to have been understood by the author of the Greek version, who, however, has not given the sense of the two Hebrew words יהוה צדקנו,§ but has joined them together as belonging to the same person, και τουτο το ονομα ὁ καλεσει αυτον κυριος Ιωσηδεκ.¶ The corresponding passage in chap. xxxiii. 16, is wanting in the Vatican and Alexandrian manuscripts of the Septuagint, but is found in some others, thus: Τουτο εστι το ονομα ὁ κληθησεται Κυριος δικαιοσυνη ἡμων.** It is objected that, in this latter passage, the name is given to Jerusalem. "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, JEHOVAH our righteousness." But the words have been rendered, *this is he who shall call to her, Jehovah our righteousness.* The word *name* is not in the original Hebrew. It is supposed by some critics, that the passage has sustained an alteration, and that it was originally the same as in the twenty-third chapter, and as it is found in several manuscripts. There is little reason to doubt that the Messiah is here announced as JEHOVAH, and as our Righteousness, in allusion to the inestimable benefit resulting to us from his mediation. "He brought in an everlasting righteousness," and "of God is made to us righteousness."

Isaiah viii. 13, 14. "Sanctify JEHOVAH of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." But these words are applied to Christ in the 8th verse of the second chapter of the first Epistle of Peter.—Isaiah xlv. 21—23. "Who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I JEHOVAH?—I have sworn by myself, the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." When we find an apostle representing it as the design of the exaltation of Christ, that every knee should bow at his name, and every tongue confess that he is Lord;* and quoting this passage as a proof that we shall all appear before his judgment seat,† can we doubt that he was considered by Paul as the JEHOVAH who speaks in the writings of the prophets?—Zechariah xii. 10. In the preceding context, the speaker is JEHOVAH, and he says, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." The last words are quoted by the Evangelist John on the occasion of our Saviour's side being pierced with a spear.‡ But JEHOVAH declares that it was he who was treated in this manner. How could this be, since the Divine nature is impassible? The words are intelligible upon our hypothesis, and upon no other, that he, who suffered on the cross, was greater than he seemed to be, was the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary, the eternal and living One, and a man of flesh and blood.

These passages are sufficient to shew that our Saviour receives the name of JEHOVAH; and as God appropriates it to himself, and declares that he will not give it to another, it follows, that although he was born in Bethlehem, and died on Calvary, he is fitly described by the name which is expressive of eternal and independent existence.

In the second place, We prove the Divinity of Christ from the ascription of divine perfections to him. We know nothing of any being but by its properties. What matter and spirit are, we cannot tell; but there are certain qualities by which they are distinguished, and when we discover those of the one class or the other, we pronounce that the subject, in which they inhere, is matter or spirit. Properties are inseparable from essences. A stone does not think, nor is a mind tangible and divisible. Sensation, motion, and instincts distinguish the inferior animals; reason is characteristic of man; and ascending to the highest Being in the universe, we conceive him to possess perfections, of which there are either no traces in his creatures, or only faint lineaments which preclude all comparison, and place them at an immeasurable distance from him. Infinite as they are, they could not exist in a finite nature; for it would be an express contradiction to suppose a being to be limited and unlimited; to be bounded in essence, but unbounded in energies; to be confined to a portion of space, and yet to operate throughout all space. If, then, we find that divine properties are ascribed to any person, by authority which proves that they do actually belong to him, we must believe that his nature is divine. Absolute eternity, immensity, omniscience, and omnipotence, are incompatible with the idea of a creature.

First, Eternity is ascribed to Christ, by which I mean, not merely an existence which will have no end, for in this sense angels and human spirits are eternal, but an existence which had no beginning. He is said to have been "in the beginning with God," that is, as the Evangelist explains himself, "before any thing was

* Isaiah vi. 3. † John xii. 41. ‡ Matt. iii. 1, 3. ‖ Luke i. 17.

§ The Lord our Righteousness.

¶ Dr. Dick appears to think that the clause should be rendered, "And this is the name which the Lord Josedek shall call him," instead of, "And this is the name which the Lord shall call him, Josedek."

** This is the name which he shall be called, Lord our Righteousness.

* Phil. ii. 9—11. † Rom. xiv. 11, 12. ‡ John xix. 37.

made;" "to have been before all things," and "to have had glory with the Father before the world was."* It may be objected, that these expressions prove only his pre-existence, and that he might have been created before all worlds, as Arians believe. But, to affirm of any person that he existed before any thing was made, is to exempt him from the number of creatures; and, if there had been no prejudice in the way, would have been universally so understood. If, however, our antagonists demand something more explicit, I would remind them that, in his first Epistle, John calls him "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested" to the world;† pretty plainly signifying, that before his incarnation he possessed an eternal existence. In the Book of Revelation, he says of himself, "I am the First, and the Last, and the Living one." "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."‡ The same idea is here thrice repeated in different terms, and this, added to the solemnity of the language, unavoidably leads us to regard it as an important one. I cannot conceive how any man could persuade himself, that such language might be used of a creature. It does not admit of being explained as signifying any thing less than an eternal duration; and God applies it to himself in the Old Testament: "Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I JEHOVAH, the First, and with the Last; I am he." "I am the First, and I am the Last, and besides me there is no God." "I am he; I am the First, I also am the Last."‖ There is another passage in the Revelation, the application of which has been disputed, but in which there is reason to think that Christ is the speaker. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord," or, according to Griesbach's corrected text, "*The Lord God*, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."§ In the preceding verse, Christ is expressly mentioned; and after the two next verses, he announces himself in the same words: "I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last." If he is a different being from the Lord God, why does he immediately assume his style? Would it have been dutiful and reverent to proclaim himself by the titles under which the Creator had revealed himself a moment before? At any rate, if the speakers are different, they are both possessed of the absolute eternity which the titles denote.—The last passage which I shall produce is in Micah: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting."¶ An existence which should commence in time, and an existence which had no beginning, are both ascribed to the Messiah. To assert that his goings forth were from everlasting, because God had made an eternal decree concerning him, (in respect of which there was no difference between him and every other Bethlehemite), is so gross a perversion, that it is unworthy of farther attention. "Though the two principal terms," (קדם and עולם), says Dr. Smith, "taken separately, are occasionally used to denote a limited (yet to present and human apprehensions, a very long and hidden) period; the proper and usual meaning of each is a REAL ETERNITY; each occurs in passages evidently intended to be the most solemn assertions of Infinite Duration, and the combination of the two furnishes the strongest expressions for that purpose, of which the Hebrew language is capable."**

In the second place, Another divine perfection which is ascribed to Jesus Christ, is omnipresence. I need not say that this is a perfection peculiar to God, and of which there is not even a shadow in any creature, because it implies immensity of nature. "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."* We cannot remove from his presence; but whether we ascend to heaven, or descend into hell, or fly on the wings of the morning to the ends of the earth, he is there to meet us. Now let us observe whether any thing is said in Scripture concerning our Lord, which implies the possession of this perfection; and as there can be no doubt among Christians that he knows his own nature, and is the faithful and true Witness, I shall lay before you his own words. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven."† The meaning of the first part of this verse has been differently explained, not being quite obvious, because it refers to an ascension to heaven as a past event. He had said to Nicodemus, who was astonished at the doctrine of the new birth, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?"‡ He adds, that he only was qualified to give information concerning these things, for no man, but himself, had been in heaven to acquire the knowledge of them, by immediate intercourse with God. It is not affirmed that he had ascended to heaven, but that no other man had. Unitarians give a figurative meaning to the whole verse, and express it thus: "No one has ever been admitted to a participation of the Divine counsels, except the Son of man, Jesus of Nazareth, who has been commissioned to reveal the will of God to man, and is perfectly instructed and qualified for this purpose." But what strange language do they put into the mouth of our Lord; language calculated to mislead, while it would have been equally easy to express the matter plainly, and much better, as all danger of mistake would have been prevented. He who has no end to serve by perverting the words, will acknowledge that they teach a literal descent from heaven, and, what is more directly to our purpose, his presence in heaven at the time when he was addressing Nicodemus: "The Son of man who *is*" not who *was* "in heaven." He had descended from it, economically, by assuming our nature; but he had not left it in respect of his essence. He had another nature besides that which was visible, a nature which was not confined to one place. By declaring that he was on earth and in heaven at the same time, he assumed that Divine perfection which is expressed in the words formerly quoted: "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" The evidence of this passage presses hard upon the opponents of his Divinity; and Dr. Priestley was driven to his last shift, when he ventured to express a suspicion that either John's amanuensis mistook what he dictated, or that John himself, being old when he wrote his Gospel, had forgotten what his master said. Surely the man must have spoken against the conviction of his own mind.

Our Lord promised, that "where two or three were gathered together in his name, he would be in the midst of them."‖ It is an arbitrary assumption, that this promise was confined to the Apostolic age, as there is the same reason for the presence of Christ with his people, in all ages of the world. To say, that he would be present with them in spirit, as Paul was with the Corinthians, or would be present with them by his authority delegated to them, is to put a sense upon the words which they would never suggest to an honest man, who had no object but to ascertain their real

* John i. 2, and xvii, 5. † 1 John i. 2.
‡ Rev. i. 17, 18, and xxii. 13. ‖ Isaiah xli. 4. xliv. 6. xlviii. 12.
§ Rev. i. 8. ¶ Micah v. 2.
** Scripture Testimony, B. ii. chap. 4. sect. 27.

* Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. † John iii. 13.
‡ Ib. v. 11, 12. ‖ Matt. xviii. 20.

meaning. Unitarians speak of a corporeal presence of Christ with his followers, and appeal to the case of Stephen, who saw him at his death, and of Paul, to whom he appeared in the way to Damascus. Granting that there was a bodily presence of our Saviour on those occasions, we ask for proof that the first christians, to whom they would restrict this privilege, were always favoured with it in their religious assemblies. We say that this was impossible. How could he be present at the same time, in a thousand congregations, held in Judea, in Asia Minor, in Greece, and in Italy? If he was in one, he could not be in another; but he promised to be in the midst of them all. Do Unitarians believe, with Lutherans, the ubiquity of his human nature, or, with Papists, the doctrine of transubstantiation? Our Lord promised to be in the midst of his disciples in the same sense in which God was in the midst of his ancient people, namely, by a real but invisible presence. Once more, when he gave his Apostles a commission to teach and baptize all nations, he said, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."* ἑως της συντελειας του αιωνος. Some translate, *to the end of the age*, or the end of the Jewish dispensation. It is certain, however, that the phrase occurs where it must signify the end of the world, and I can see no good reason for giving it here a different sense. In particular, I am at a loss to conceive what Unitarians would gain by the new version, and their efforts to establish it are a waste of criticism; for if, according to their hypothesis, Christ could be with his disciples to the end of that age, he could as well be with them to the end of the world; and we may, with perfect safety, admit the one interpretation as well as the other. But the truth is, that if he had been a mere man, he could not have performed his promise even for a short period, as we have shown above; and it is a mere imagination to think that the difficulty is lessened by abbreviating the time. How could Christ, if he was not a Divine person, be present with his followers in all places of the world, in the plain import of the promise? It would have availed them little that they had his authority and approbation, or even that he knew what they were doing, if he had not been near to direct, assist and defend them.

In the third place, The Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ is omniscient. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."† We may remark by the way, that there must be something peculiar about the Son, something which distinguishes him from all other persons, since he is known, fully understood, and comprehended only by the Father. But what is to be observed in those verses for our present purpose is, that the knowledge of the Son by the Father, and of the Father by the Son, are commensurate, that is, the Son as thoroughly knows the Father as the Father knows the Son. There is no distinction of degrees, but the one knowledge is as perfect as the other. It may be objected, that others are represented as knowing the Father, and therefore, that the knowledge of the Son is not necessarily perfect more than theirs, although it may be granted to be superior. But observe this difference, that the knowledge which they possess is communicated by his revelation; whereas his knowledge is not revealed to him, but is natural and underived, like that of the Father. As the latter knows the Son, so the Son knows the Father by intuition. Knowledge is in him, as water is in a lake or reservoir; but is in others, as water in a stream, inferior in quantity as well as dependent upon the source. The simple consideration that their knowledge is secondary, sets aside the idea of equality. *He* has such knowledge of the Father as the Father has of him; *they* have such knowledge of the Father as the Son is pleased to communicate.—"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, on the feast-day, many believed on his name when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them," or placed no confidence in them; and for what reason? Had they exhibited any external evidence of insincerity? Had they, by word or deed, given him any ground to suspect them? The Evangelist lets fall no hint of this kind; but adds, "because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man."* The persons spoken of were struck by his miracles, and acknowledged him to be the Messiah. Any other man would have been satisfied with their profession; but he was not, because he was acquainted with their sentiments and feelings, and knew that nothing more had been produced by his miracles than a transient impression. It is plainly affirmed that he saw their hearts, although they were concealed from other eyes by fallacious signs; that he saw the hearts not of those alone, but of all men; and that his knowledge was immediate and intuitive. He needed no testimony, but knew in himself. Is not this the knowledge of God? knowledge which he claims exclusively to himself. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."† In accordance with the words of the Evangelist are those of our Saviour himself in the book of Revelation. "All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to his works."‡ It is worthy of attention, that, with a slight alteration, these are the words of God which have just been quoted from Jeremiah.—"Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me! And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."‖ An attempt has been made to prove that these words do not imply omniscience, because John says to Christians in general, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."§ But expressions are to be explained by the connexion. The Apostle in this latter passage is speaking of false teachers, antichrists as he calls them, who were endeavouring to draw away the disciples from the faith; and he consoles them by the consideration that they had received an anointing, the influences of the Holy Spirit, to enable them to distinguish between truth and error, to know all the subjects in dispute, or all the essential doctrines of religion. It is perfectly evident, that the universal phrase, *all things*, must be so limited. But Peter, in his reply to Christ, refers, not to the knowledge of doctrines or actions, but to the knowledge of the heart. Jesus had thrice asked whether Peter loved him. The repetition of the question after it had been answered in the affirmative, seemed to imply a doubt of his sincerity, and he said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." 'Why dost thou put the question so often? There is nothing concealed from thee, not even the secrets of the heart. Thou needest not to be told that my affection to thee is genuine.' This is plainly to ascribe omniscience to Christ, who was so far from correcting the apostle, as he would have done if he had deified him being only a man, that he gave a virtual sanction to what he had said, by subjoining, "Feed my sheep."

Farther, Immutability is ascribed to him, which is a divine attribute incommunicable to a creature. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, and for ever,"¶ or the same in all ages, past, present, and to come. This proposition was intended, as appears from the

* Matt. xxviii. 20. † Matt. xi. 27.

* John ii. 23—25. † Jer. xvii. 9, 10. ‡ Rev. ii. 23.
‖ John xx. 17. § 1 John ii. xx. ¶ Heb. xiii. 8.

context, either to excite the Hebrews to imitate the conduct of their rulers who had died in the Lord, by an assurance of the same happy result to themselves, founded on the unfailing love and power of the Redeemer; or to engage them to constancy in the faith, because the Author of the Gospel is unchangeable in his authority to command, and in his ability to protect and reward. Whatever is the connexion, it is solemnly asserted that he is a person, of whom perpetual identity of nature and character may be predicated. If he is only a man, it is impossible to conceive with what propriety these things are spoken of him. His history is full of changes. Not only did he pass through those which commonly happen to men, but he was once in a state of profound humiliation, and now he is raised to great dignity and authority. According to Socinus and his followers, he experienced the most wonderful of all changes, for having been a man, he has since been made a God. To ascribe immutability to his person, if merely human, would be absurd and contrary to fact; and on this hypothesis, such passages as convey that idea can be understood only of his doctrine. But his person is certainly the subject of the following address, and he is contemplated in his uncreated nature. "And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands; They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."* There can be no doubt to whom these words should be applied, because they are quoted in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to prove the superiority of the Son to angels. They refer immediately to his immutable duration; but this attribute is peculiar to one who exists by necessity of nature, which implies the perpetual possession of every possible perfection.

Lastly, Divine power is ascribed to him. He is called the mighty God, when he is announced by a prophet as a child to be born, and a Son to be given to us;† and "his kingdom ruleth over all." But the consideration of his omnipotence leads me to the next part of our division.

In the third place, It was proposed to prove the Divinity of our Saviour from the works which are ascribed to him, and which are evidently such as no mere man, and I may add, no creature could perform. Of this our adversaries are aware, and accordingly employ their arts of criticism to prove, that he did not perform them.

I begin with a passage, in which he evidently claims Divine power, and represents his own works as of equal extent with those of his Father. "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."‡ The occasion of these words, was a charge brought against him of having profaned the Sabbath, because he had cured a lame man upon it. How does he justify himself? Is it by the plea, that works of mercy are not a violation of the sacred rest of that day? No: it is by alleging the example of God, who carries on the operations of providence upon all the days of the week, and intimating very plainly, that he had the same right to work whenever he pleased. The example of God is appealed to in vain, if he did not possess the same authority, and was not equally independent of the law of the Sabbath. No mere man could plead, without impiety, this reason for working on the first day of the week. How should we be shocked if any person presumed to say to those who reproved him for breaking the Sabbath, God works, and therefore I may work? It is to be observed farther, that he represents himself as doing the same works which are done by the Father, and he expresses himself without any reservation: "What things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." Every work performed by the one, is performed by the other. But this was impossible without an equality of power; and our Lord must be understood as, in the most explicit terms, claiming omnipotence. It may be objected, that he says, "the Son can do nothing of himself." But, if we should not be able satisfactorily to explain these words, still it is clear that, in concurrence with the Father, he is capable of producing every possible effect. The words probably refer to the mysterious union of the Father and the Son, in consequence of which the one does not work without the other, but both carry on their operations in concert; and he might refer to this fact in order to repel the accusation of the Jews; for how could he be guilty of profaning the Sabbath by a work, which he had performed in concurrence with the Author of the Sabbath? I proceed to particulars.

First, The creation of the universe is ascribed to him. "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."* Παντα is a universal term, and is so to be understood, unless circumstances obviously require it to be limited in its meaning. Our opponents would restrict it, not from any necessity arising from the context, but because they must get quit of this proof of the Divinity of Christ. By *all things*, then, we are to understand, according to them, the moral world, or the Church. *All things are reformed by him*, say some, for he introduced a new religion, to correct the errors and vices of mankind; or, *all things were done by him*, as other critics choose to render the word εγενετο. He did all things in the New Dispensation; he preached the gospel, and gave a commission to the Apostles, and enacted laws for the government of his followers. The Evangelist happens to say soon after, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."† The translation of εγενετο, which was proper in the third verse, will be proper also in the tenth, which we must read thus: "He was in the world, and the world was done by him." Whether the world means the earth, or its inhabitants, it would puzzle Œdipus himself to explain the proposition, "*The world was done by Christ.*" To say, that *all things* are the church, or the human race as reformed by the Gospel, is liable to this objection, that the Evangelist uses *the world*, in verse 10, as an equivalent term to *all things*, in verse 3; and the *world* never, in the sacred writings, signifies the Church, although *the world to come* sometimes denotes the New Dispensation. Besides, how could it be said, that Christ was in this world, and it knew him not? The reformed world always knew him, for it was reformed by the Gospel which revealed him. This Unitarian comment may be dismissed as unintelligible. The most distinguished critics have understood the words in the literal acceptation, and rejected the figurative sense as absurd. We formerly referred to this passage as a proof of the pre-existence of our Saviour; and, taking into one view the various attempts which have been made to explain away all the particulars in it, we may say with Dr. Owen, "I think, since the beginning, place it where you will, the beginning of the world, or the beginning of the gospel, there never was such an exposition of the words of God or

* Heb. i. 10—12. † Isa. ix. 6. ‡ John v. 17—19.

* John i. 3. † John, i. 10.

man." Christ was in the beginning of his own ministry; a fact, no doubt, which we should not have known, if the Evangelist had not informed us of it; he was with God, or he retired to converse with him, and to receive instructions for his ministry; he was a God, or, in truth, was not a God, but a mere man; and he made all things, that is, he made nothing, but reformed some things. Such are the wonderful discoveries of Unitarian criticism.

Colos. i. 16, 17.—"For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." One should think that this single passage would be sufficient to settle the dispute. It is a commentary, or amplification of the words of the Evangelist, "And without him was not any thing made that was made." It will be acknowledged, I think, by every person of candour, that, if it had been the design of the Apostle to inform us, that Jesus Christ created the world, he could not have selected terms more proper for the purpose. The universe is described by "all things in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible," for every thing is comprehended in this classification; and thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, are specified, that no room might be left for imagining, that he was concerned in making only the subordinate parts of it. If it should be asked, how he, who was born about sixty years before the date of this Epistle, could give being to this material and intellectual frame, which, according to the Hebrew chronology, had existed for four thousand years? it is stated, that *he was before it*, before it in time, in respect of his superior nature, of which abundant proof has been already produced. Lest it should be alleged, in order to evade the evidence of his proper Divinity, that he acted by delegated power, and was not the primary agent, but a minister of God, it is added, that as all things were created, *δι αυτου, by him*, so they were created, *εις αυτον, to him*, or *for him*. He is the last end of the creation, as the Father is said to be, "who made the world by Jesus Christ," and of whom it is said, *εξ αυτου, και δι αυτου, και εις αυτον τα παντα*, "of him, and through him, and to him are all things."* Now, *he* must be considered a principal in the work, for whose glory it was wrought. It may be objected, that, in the preceding verse, Christ is called *πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως*, the *first-born* of the *whole creation*,† and is thus numbered among creatures. But, this inference is directly at variance with the verses following, for if all things, without exception, were created by him, how can he be one of them? Did he create himself? Unless we are disposed to charge the Apostle with a palpable blunder, a gross contradiction, we must understand *πρωτοτοκος*, either, according to the explanation of some, as signifying the *first-begetter* or the *producer* of all things, or as used here (as it is on some other occasions) metaphorically, to denote a person holding the chief place, the Lord of the whole creation, as the first-born in a family was lord and possessor of the inheritance. This sense of the term agrees with the words following, for undoubtedly he is Supreme over all things by whom "they were created." Here, again, that species of criticism which seeks not to illustrate but to obscure, not to interpret but to pervert, has employed its usual arts to evade the evidence. The passage, we are told, signifies a new moral creation effected by the Gospel; the things in heaven and on earth are the Jews and Gentiles, who have been enlightened and reformed by it; and things visible and invisible, are the present and future generations of men. Was a commentary so far-fetched, and so different from the natural sense of the terms, ever given before? We might ask Unitarians, whether they actually believe this to be the real sense of the passage? Or, if it be said that we have no right to bring them to confession, we may ask them, whether it would have occurred to any person who had not first determined to reject the literal meaning, and then tortured his brains to find out another more suitable to a preconceived system? It is a discovery of modern date; for ages the words were understood as we explain them; and the Greek Fathers, who read the New Testament in their vernacular language, considered the Apostle as describing a proper creation.

In the second place, The preservation of all things is ascribed to him. "By him all things consist,"* *συνιστηκε*, are kept together, or preserved from falling into confusion or annihilation. This is surely a Divine work; and it could not be said, consistently with reason and piety, that the universe is sustained by a creature. The same thing is taught in another place:—"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power,"—*φερων τε τα παντα τω ρηματι της δυναμεως αυτου*,—"sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high."† *Τα παντα* signifies the universe, which the Son of God bears up, or sustains, by his mighty word. The expression excludes the idea of labour or difficulty, and imports that the creation is continued in existence and order by his efficacious will. "Thou, even thou, art JEHOVAH alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all," or "makest them all to live."‡ "JEHOVAH, thou preservest man and beast."‖ When we find similar language used concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, there can remain no doubt that he also is JEHOVAH, unless we will venture to say, that the sustentation of living and inanimate beings is falsely ascribed to him by the Apostle, or that God has, since the time when the Psalmist and Prophet wrote, admitted a creature to co-operate with him in the administrations of providence.

In the third place, The resurrection of the dead is ascribed to him. It will be universally acknowledged that this is exclusively a work of God. He only who first framed the human body, and connected with it a living spirit, can restore that body after it has undergone dissolution in the grave, and bring back the soul from the invisible world to its original abode. Agreeable to this dictate of reason is the declaration of Scripture, that it is "God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."§ Jesus Christ raised the dead while he was sojourning on the earth; as the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus, besides many others not named; and it is he who will appear in the end of the world, and restore to life the millions of the human race who are sleeping in the dust. "The hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."¶ It may be objected, that this work is not a decisive proof of his Divinity, because the dead were raised by some of the Prophets, and by all the Apostles, who received power to this effect when they were sent forth to preach, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead."** The simple fact, that they received this power from our Saviour, is sufficient to convince us of his superiority. What they did, they did in his name; and, consequently, we cannot justly consider him and them as possessing an equality of power. Let it be farther observed, that while the Prophets raised the dead in the name of the God of Israel, and the Apostles in the name

* Eph. iii. 9. Rom. xi. 36. † Colos. i. 15.

* Colos. i. 17. † Heb. i. 3. ‡ Neh. ix. 6. ‖ Ps. xxxvi. 6.
§ Rom. iv. 17. ¶ John v. 28, 29. ** Matt. x. 8.

of their Master, he performed this miracle in his own name, that is, by his own power, and spake of himself in terms, which no Prophet or Apostle would have presumed to employ:—"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."* Still it may be said, that the power which he displayed upon earth, and will more gloriously manifest at the general resurrection, is not his own, but is the power of God, with the exercise of which he was entrusted for the purposes of his mission. But the delegation of omnipotence to a creature is inconceivable and impossible; the supposition of delegated power is incousistent with the performance of the work in his own name, and it is directly opposed to his express declaration, "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."† These words are an explicit assumption of equal power with the Father, and of the same uncontrolled and sovereign exercise of it in the restoration of life.

In the last place, The final judgment is ascribed to him. The Scripture says, that "JEHOVAH is our judge;"‡ but it says also, that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."‖ "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory,—all nations shall be gathered before him."§ The inference is plain, that Jesus Christ is God. It may be said, (and this is the language of Scripture itself,) that God will judge the world *by him;* but let us not be carried away by the sound of words, without attending to their meaning. The visible Judge will be a man, it is acknowledged; but will he be a mere man? Is a creature to decide the fate of other creatures? Was it his law which they obeyed or transgressed? Has a creature the reward of heaven and the punishment of hell at his disposal? These questions suggest a negative answer to every person not divested of reason and piety. Every one must give an account of himself to God, and who but God is qualified to receive the account? Omniscience is necessary to him who pronounces the final sentence, as well as omnipotence to execute it; for it will proceed, not merely upon the external actions of men, but upon their motives and their thoughts, which are known to him alone who sees not with the eyes of flesh, but searches the hearts and tries the reins. Christ will indeed act in concurrence with the Father, who is hence said to judge the world by him; but the high office necessarily supposes him to be possessed of infinite perfections.

LECTURE XXXII.

ON THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

Divinity of Christ inferred from the Religious Worship and Honour rendered to him; Instances—The Doctrine of his Divinity shewn to be interwoven with the Scriptural Scheme of Redemption—Objections stated and answered.

I PROCEED, in the fourth place, to prove the Divinity of Christ from the religious honours which are given to him.

Reason and Scripture concur in appropriating religious worship to God, who alone is possessed of those perfections which are presupposed in the object of our prayers and thanksgivings, and the sentiments and affections which these are designed to express, as supreme respect, love, trust, hope, and resignation. It is an understood condition, that he whom we address has a perfect knowledge of our situation,—comprehending our dangers, our temptations, our afflictions, and our desires; that he has resources adequate to the supply of all who make application to him; and that he is able to afford us effectual assistance in every possible case. We believe him to be omniscient, omnipotent, and infinite in goodness. To worship a creature is as great an absurdity as it would be to intreat a poor man to make us rich, or a subject to pardon us, while the remission of punishment is the exclusive prerogative of the sovereign. It is sacrilege, a robbery of God, from whom we take the honour to which he has an exclusive right, and transfer it to a being who, in comparison with him, is less than nothing and vanity. It is the idolatry which is prohibited under the severest denunciations, and which consists in giving that glory to another which is due to God alone, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."* "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."† The Gentiles are condemned for erecting temples and altars, offering sacrifices, and addressing prayers to others besides the Creator of heaven and earth, and are pronounced guilty because "they did service to those who by nature were not gods." From these, and innumerable passages, it appears that religious worship should be given to the self-existent and all-perfect Being alone; that he will not permit, and still less command, us to worship a creature; that a creature cannot acquire by rank, or dignity, or office, a right to the honour which is peculiar to Him who derives nothing from others, and gives to all the life which they enjoy, and the qualifications by which they are distinguished.

That religious worship is given to Jesus Christ, we shall afterwards see; but in the mean time, I remark, that from a perception of the necessary connexion between Divine worship and the Divinity of the object, Socinus maintained that our Saviour, although a man by nature, had, since his exaltation, become *Verus Deus*, true God, having received supreme dominion over heaven and earth, and being made a partaker of the Divine perfections of omniscience and omnipotence. But upon this point, there was a division among his followers, some of whom denied that Christ could be lawfully worshipped, while Socinus defended the contrary opinion, and refused to acknowledge those who differed from him to be Christians. The controversy was carried on with much keenness, and Socinus, impelled by intolerant zeal, which, it seems, is not peculiar to the orthodox, complained to the Prince of Transylvania, who committed his principal antagonist, Francis David, to prison, in which he died. If Socinus agreed with the Scriptures, in asserting that Divine honours should be paid to our Lord, he was at variance with his own fundamental tenet of his simple humanity, and sought in vain to reconcile the two statements by the inconceivable notion of his subsequent deification. David and others who joined with him (for he was not alone) saw more clearly, or avowed more honestly, the consequences of the opinion which they held in common concerning the person of Christ: for certainly, if he was only a man, they reasoned justly when they affirmed, that by no change of state could he become entitled to the same honour with God. Religious worship is not founded in arbitrary appointment, but in the nature of things. It is not due to God, merely because it is commanded, but because, possessing all perfection, he is worthy of it, and we are his creatures who hold all by his bounty, and are dependent upon his care. This reason of worship is wanting in all created beings, in the highest as well as in the lowest. Hence Francis David and his friends had the advantage in their dispute with Socinus, and urged him with arguments, to which he could not answer in a satisfactory manner.

* John xi. 25. † John v. 21. ‡ Isa. xxxiii. 22.
‖ 2 Cor. v. 10. § Matt. xxv. 31, 32.

* Exod. xx. 3. † Luke iv. 8.

I proceed to the proof, that Jesus Christ is the object of religious worship, and begin with his own general declaration: "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."* Observe the occasion on which these words were spoken. It was when the Jews, who were offended because he had profaned the Sabbath, as they thought, by curing a lame man upon it, now accused him of blasphemy in making himself equal to God. If our Lord had been a mere man, he would have repelled the charge, and shewn that his pretensions were not higher than a creature might have made without arrogance and impiety. But does he utter a single word to this effect? No! his whole discourse is a repetition of his claim, and the words now under consideration are not the least remarkable part of it. We cannot conceive a more explicit assertion of his equality with the Father. He claims equal honour, and would he have done so, if his dignity had not been equal? The honour which is given to the Father, is to be given also to the Son. Now the honour which we give to the Father consists in adoration, praise, unreserved confidence, humble submission, and, in a word, the dedication of soul and body to his service. We are therefore to adore the Son, to make him the object of our trust and hope, to resign ourselves to his disposal, and to yield implicit obedience to his commands. There is no mention made here of supreme and subordinate honour, but in every respect it is the same. And it is enjoined by the Father himself. But if Jesus Christ is a mere man, as Unitarians affirm, how can the will of the Father, in this case, be reconciled with his general declaration, that he will not give his glory to another? Has he revoked it in favour of the Son of Mary? Is the God of the New Testament at variance with the God of the Old? It is in vain to compare the words of Paul, "He that despiseth us, despiseth not man, but God;"† for they are totally different. There is no demand of the same respect to the apostles, which belongs to God himself, but a simple and intelligible declaration, that as they were the messengers of God, the contempt with which some might treat their message would ultimately terminate upon Him. No Apostle ever said, It is the will of the Father, that all men should honour us, even as they honour himself. They would have deemed it impious to speak so: and they guarded against such an idea, by saying to those who were disposed to admire them, "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?"‡ "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."‖

That Jesus Christ was worshipped by the primitive Christians, is a fact so clearly established in the New Testament, that nothing but prejudice, blinding the mental eye, can hinder any person from perceiving it. The truth is, that this worship was so general, and so publicly known, that it is used as a description of his followers, who are more than once denominated those *who called upon his name*; a phrase which often occurs in the Scriptures, and signifies invocation or prayer. "He hath authority to bind all that call upon thy name."§—παντας τους επικαλουμενους το ονομα σου. "To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord," συν παντι τοις επικαλουμενοις το ονομα του Κυριου ημων Ιησου Χριστου.¶ It has been asserted, indeed, that the words may be rendered, *who are called*, or, *who call themselves* by thy name, that is, who profess to be the disciples of Christ. It has been observed, however, that in Scripture, when it is designed to express the idea of denominating, or calling after another, a different form is used, and the name of the one person is then said to be *called upon* the other. "The house upon which thy name is called." "My people upon whom my name is called."* It has been farther observed, that in the translation of the Seventy, when a tense of the verb επικαλεω† occurs in the middle voice, it has an active signification, and denotes calling upon another. The phrase, επικαλεισθαι το ονομα,—του θεου,—μου,—αυτου,‡ occurs often, and is expressive of the act of invocation. Even those critics, who would give a different translation when the verb is used in reference to our Saviour, render it in the sense of calling upon, when passages are quoted from the Old Testament in which the object is understood to be the Father; thus shewing, that their occasional deviations in translating it, are not founded upon the settled meaning of the term, but upon the necessity of their system. It is convenient to conceal this decisive proof of the divinity of Christ, and to represent the primitive Christians as not calling upon, but calling themselves by, his name, as the ancient philosophical sects adopted an appellation derived from their respective founders. In short, επικαλεισθαι is a complaisant word, and changes its meaning on all necessary occasions, to serve the cause of Unitarianism. The first disciples were worshippers of Christ; and there is one eminent instance which well deserves our attention. "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon and saying," (this is the literal translation, and the word *God*, which our translators have inserted, is an unnecessary and improper supplement,) "calling upon and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."‖ It has been said, that "this solitary example is of itself no sufficient warrant for a practice contrary to the precepts of Christ, and the doctrine of the Apostles." That it is contrary to the precepts of Christ, and the doctrine of the Apostles, we deny; and that it is not a solitary example, has already appeared; but it is thus that Unitarians, those masters of reason, draw conclusions without premises, and assume as certain what remains to be proved. Is this their respect for a holy man and a martyr? Was the last act of his life an act of transgression? Did his expiring breath utter the language of idolatry? How, then, was he "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost?" It has been said again, that the invocation of Stephen was justifiable, because Christ was really present, and the martyr saw him; but that our case is very different, because Christ is now at a great distance from us in heaven. But we would ask those who make use of this argument, whether it would be lawful to pray to our Saviour, or to invoke his aid, if he were present? If they answer in the affirmative, then we tell them, that it is lawful for us, as well as for Stephen, to pray to him, because it has been proved that, in his divine nature, he fills heaven and earth. But, as they allege that he was only a man, we ask again, whether Stephen, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, would address such a prayer to him, even when he was present? What was it to "receive his spirit," but to admit him into the region of everlasting peace? What was it "not to lay sin to the charge" of his murderers, but to repeal the sentence of the divine law, and grant them impunity? Were these blessings to be asked from a creature? What greater could he have asked from God? Can a creature pardon our sins, and bestow eternal life? It would be wise to abandon these miserable subterfuges. The passage is plain; and no man of candour

* John v. 22, 23. † 1 Thess. iv. 8. ‡ Acts iii. 12.
‖ 1 Cor. iii. 7. § Acts ix. 14. ¶ 1 Cor. i. 2.

* 1 Kings viii. 43. 2 Chron. vii. 14. *margin.*
† To call upon.
‡ To call upon the name,—God,—me,—him.
‖ Acts vii. 59, 60.

will rest in any other view of it, than that Stephen, enlightened and guided by the spirit of grace and supplication, died in the act of adoring his Saviour, and, therefore, that the Saviour is God.

In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, verse 6, the Apostle, among the proofs of the pre-eminence of the Son, quotes the following passage, and applies it to him: "Again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." The words are taken from the ninety-seventh Psalm, where they run thus: "Worship him all ye gods." The term *Elohim* is sometimes applied to created beings, and we have the authority of the Apostle for considering this an instance. Those who are called gods in the Psalm, are called angels in the Epistle. They are addressed while a description is given of the reign of JEHOVAH, on account of which the earth is summoned to rejoice, and the multitude of the isles to be glad. We should not have known that the reference is to the reign of the Messiah, if Paul had not informed us; but, believing that he was under the direction of the Holy Spirit, we follow with confidence when he leads the way. The gods, then, are angels, and the object of their worship is Jesus Christ. It is a mere evasion to say that "the angels are the former prophets and messengers of God, who are summoned to do homage to Christ, in consequence of his resurrection from the dead, and to acknowledge him as their superior." If celestial beings are not mentioned in this chapter, we can find them nowhere in the Scriptures; and that it is not simple homage, but religious worship which is demanded, is evident from this consideration, that he, whom they are called to worship, is, according to the Psalmist, the JEHOVAH "whose righteousness the heavens declare, and whose glory all the people see."

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."* "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."† All these things belong to our Saviour, and are ascribed to him by the holy worshipping assembly. The spirits of heaven, and the redeemed from the earth, unite in celebrating his praise. They worship him in the same manner as JEHOVAH is worshipped. "Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth, is thine."‡ As he is honoured with the same ascriptions as the Father, so he is joined with him in the same act of adoration and thanksgiving. "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."‖ Can Unitarians produce another instance in which the name of a creature is thus associated with that of God, in the devotions of his people? They will not find it in the Scriptures; they must seek for it in the litany of the church of Rome; and even there, although divine honours are given to creatures, care is professedly taken not to elevate them to the same rank with the Supreme Being, as Jesus Christ is elevated by an inspired writer in the passages quoted.

I conclude with the argument derived from the form of Christian Baptism, which is administered "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* If we suppose εις το ονομα† to be used for εν τω ονοματι,‡ we are baptized by the authority of the Son, as well as of the Father: But how can this be, if the Son is only a man? Do religious ordinances emanate from the Creator and a creature, as a common source? Do the commands of a creature bind our consciences as much as the commands of the Creator? If we translate εις το ονομα literally, *to the name*, baptism is our solemn dedication to the persons in whose name it is administered. Are we dedicated to the service of a creature? Who is Jesus Christ, if he is only a man, that we should obey him? It is said, indeed, that the Israelites "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."‖ The word Moses sometimes signifies the religion which Moses delivered as the minister of God. "When Moses is read to them, that is, the books of Moses, or the laws of Moses, "the veil is upon their hearts."§ All agree that the meaning is, that the Israelites, by passing through the Red Sea, were separated to the service of God, as enjoined by the ministry of Moses. But the meaning of the words used in Christian baptism is manifestly different, unless we choose to say that we are baptized in the name of the Father, and in the name of the Christian Religion. It is plain, that in the same sense in which we are consecrated to the Father, we are consecrated to the Son; and consequently, that we are laid under an obligation to worship and serve the one, as well as the other. We never read that the Israelites were baptized in the name of JEHOVAH and of Moses. The Lord and the servant are not joined together as objects of equal respect, as the Father and the Son are. The cause of the difference is this, that the Son is himself a Divine person, and therefore entitled to the same honour with the Father.

I have gone over, in order, the proofs which are usually adduced to establish the Divinity of Christ. It is wonderful, that a point so clearly taught in the sacred writings, should have ever been made the subject of dispute; it is still more wonderful that, after the ample discussion which it has undergone, it has not been settled to the satisfaction of all parties. There is something unaccountable in the opposition which it has met with from persons professing to receive the Scriptures as the standard of their faith. If the arguments which present themselves in such abundance, whether consisting in express testimonies, or in legitimate and obvious inferences from them, are deemed insufficient, it would puzzle a wiser man than I pretend to be, to tell what would convince. The doctrine could not have been stated in plainer terms. He who runs may read it, if he will open his eyes. It is probable that, in whatever terms the doctrine had been delivered, some men would have objected. Human language, the only vehicle of Divine communications to human beings, is not proof against Unitarian criticism, which wrests words from their natural sense, and affixes any meaning to them, however harsh and remote, which suits the design of the critics. All that we can gain by our controversy with them, is to expose their unfairness to the world, that the simple and inconsiderate may not be seduced: of convincing them we have no hope, unless that power be exerted which casts down imaginations, and every high thing, and brings all the thoughts into captivity to Christ.

To the arguments which have been stated, nothing needs to be added. But for your complete satisfaction, I shall lay before you some considerations, arising from a different view of the subject, and shewing that the Divinity of Christ is interwoven with the scheme of

* Rev. i. 5, 6. † Rev. v. 11, 12.
‡ 1 Chron. xvi. 28, 29. xxix. 11. ‖ Rev. vii. 10.

* Matt. xxviii. 19. † Into the name. ‡ In the name.
‖ 1 Cor. x. 2. § 2 Cor. iii. 15.

Redemption. It is a sort of *a posteriori* reasoning, which, from the character that he sustains in that great work, and the part that he acts, proves that he must be a person superior in dignity to all men, and to all creatures.

First, Let us consider him as the Revealer of the Divine Will, the Instructor of the human race. In this general office, men were associated with him, as the Prophets of the old dispensation, and the Apostles of the new; and hence he bears the same names, being called "the Prophet whom God raised up according to his promise," and "the Apostle of our profession." His pre-eminence, however, is undisputed; and it will be acknowledged by all, that no other person was ever so gifted, or possessed of equal authority. It belonged to him in this character, to complete and close divine revelation; to make known to the world the whole counsel of God; to publish truths which eye had not seen, ear had not heard, nor had it entered into the mind of man to conceive; and further, internally to illuminate the minds of men, to remove the veil of prejudice and error, to impart a vivid and commanding perception of invisible things, to dispose them to receive truths humiliating to the pride, and revolting to the corrupt propensities of the heart. If it be granted that the latter part of this statement was comprehended in his office, it cannot be consistently denied that he was greater than a human teacher; for no mere man has an absolute control over the minds of others, and can guide their movements according to his pleasure. But even the communication of a perfect knowledge of the Divine Will, which was effected by his own ministry, and by that of his Apostles whom he qualified for the work, seems to have required greater powers of understanding than could fall to the lot of a creature; an understanding commensurate to the subject, which has a height and a depth, a length and a breadth, not to be measured by a limited capacity. If it should be said, that God might have illuminated his mind, as he illuminated the minds of other Prophets, and fitted him for his duty by successive revelations, we should recollect that according to his own testimony, he had the same knowledge of the Father which the Father had of him. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son."* We should recollect, that the Evangelist John ascribes a knowledge to him quite peculiar, when he says, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."† Would he have used such language of any creature? To see God, is to know him perfectly; to be in his bosom, is to be the intimate associate of his counsels. More is meant than that the man Jesus Christ had a greater degree of knowledge than other men; the words evidently import, that he had knowledge of a totally different kind, arising from immediate vision, and perpetual communion. No Prophet or Apostle is ever said to have enjoyed such means of knowledge, even in an inferior degree. None of them had seen God; none of them was in his bosom. The voice from the excellent Glory made a clear distinction between him and all other teachers. "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him." The Father substituted him in his own room, as the instructor of the human race; he pointed him out as the object of the attention, and faith, and obedience of the world; he commanded us henceforth to learn wisdom from his lips, and to regulate our conduct by his authority. Did he ever give such a command concerning any other person? Was it ever said concerning any other, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life."‡ "Every soul, which will not hear this Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."* We are informed that "the people were astonished at his doctrine, because he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes;" but we rise a step higher and say, not even as the Prophets. Between his manner, and theirs, there is a very remarkable difference. They, in fact, claimed no personal authority, and delivered their instructions in the name of the Lord; while he spoke in his own name: "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Who is this that requires men to take him as their supreme guide in religion? who is this that makes his own testimony the foundation of faith? Would a human messenger have ventured to advance such pretensions? Could he have adopted this lofty style without impiety? In conformity to this claim, when he gave the Apostles a commission to teach the nations, he gave it in his own name. They were his ambassadors; they were to produce his warrant for the doctrines which they taught, and the laws which they enjoined; they were to subject men to him as the Lord of their consciences. Was it a mere man who issued such orders, and demanded the homage of all people, and kindred, and tongues? I shall mention one circumstance more which is a proof of his Divinity, that he inspired those ambassadors, gave them the Holy Ghost, and invested them with the power of working miracles, to attest the truth of their message. The Apostles, it is true, also communicated supernatural gifts; but, there is this essential difference, that what they did, was done confessedly in his name, and, therefore, instead of weakening, strengthens the evidence of his power: whereas he acted with independent authority, dispensing, as a Sovereign, gifts over which he had absolute control. "He breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."† Surely this is the voice of a God, and not of a man.

In the second place, Let us consider him in the character of a priest, whose office it was to offer a propitiatory sacrifice, for the whole human race, as some maintain, or for the elect, according to others, composing a multitude which no man can number. By offering a propitiatory sacrifice, I mean, that he was to suffer death for them, that the claims of justice being satisfied, the moral Governor of the universe might release them from the penalty of sin. Now, this transaction supposes, that his sufferings were an equivalent for theirs; that the ends of punishment were as fully answered by his death, as if the transgressors had died; that the divine authority was upheld, the divine righteousness was asserted, the divine holiness was manifested in unclouded splendour. Would these designs have been accomplished by the death of a mere man? There is a manifest disproportion between the means and the end. It is unaccountable upon any principle of moral calculation, that the blood of one man, whatever value it might be conceived to have derived from his virtues and endowments, should have been accepted as a full compensation for the debt which millions owed, for innumerable violations of the law! Its acceptance as such, would have lowered the divine government in the estimation of its subjects; it would have confirmed them in the opinion, that its demands were not high, that it felt little resentment against crimes, and that it wanted only the shadow of a pretext for dismissing them with impunity. But the Scriptures teach that the death of Christ was a true and proper atonement for sin, and was so complete, that God is just, although he remit the sins of those who believe; and that the highest glory redounds to his moral perfections, from the dispensation of grace. There must, therefore, be a greater worth in the blood, and greater efficacy in the sufferings of Christ, than in the blood and sufferings of any other person. No such effect is

* Matt. xi. 27. † John i. 18. ‡ John iii. 36.

* Acts iii. 23. † John xx. 22.

ever ascribed to the death of a prophet, an apostle, or any other martyr; it is not said, that they expiated their own guilt by the sacrifice of their lives, and still less, that they expiated the guilt of their brethren. Had our blessed Lord been only a man, his blood would not have redeemed us from the curse of God, any more than the blood of Stephen, and Peter, and Paul. Of this our antagonists are sensible; and accordingly they deny that his death was vicarious, and affirm that the sole design of it was to give us an example of patience, and to attest his doctrine; thus maintaining the consistency of their own system, although they are directly at variance with the doctrine of Scripture. Such, you may observe by the way, is the intimate connexion of the truth which I am defending, with other articles of christianity, that the denial of it is the removing of the foundation, in consequence of which the whole structure falls to the ground. We, who believe the Divinity of Christ, can account, without difficulty, for the great and happy effects which are ascribed to his death. We can understand, how the sufferings of a man, who was personally united to the Son of God, were of greater value, in a moral estimate, than the sufferings of the actual transgressors. We can see, how this single sacrifice answered all the ends of justice, and demonstrated in the most solemn manner, the righteousness and holiness of the Universal Governor, the unspeakable evil of sin, the immutable purity and unbending rigour of the law. I shall not appeal to the words, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,"* because there is a various reading which substitutes *Lord* for *God*; but surely the same Apostle meant to convey a higher idea of our Saviour than that of a mere man, when he said, "Had they"—the Princes of this world—"known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;"† and again, "The law maketh men high-priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."‡ They are more blind than the princes of this world, who, amidst the light of revelation which now shines, can perceive upon Calvary no greater scene than a common martyrdom. Strange, that notwithstanding the preternatural darkness, the earthquake, and the opening of the graves, they should be more insensible than an ignorant heathen, who, convinced by the signs in heaven and on earth, that the supposed malefactor was no ordinary sufferer, exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Let us, in the last place, consider him as sustaining the character of universal Lord. He is represented as invested with supreme authority over the church, and all persons and things upon earth; and likewise over angels, principalities, and powers in the invisible world, the noblest and mightiest creatures in the universe. Besides his own declaration, "all power is committed to me in heaven and on earth," let us attend to the words of an Apostle, who, having informed us, that, though "he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God," yet "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," adds, "wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."‖ One should think, that his investiture with unlimited dominion over the creation, would prove to the satisfaction of every reflecting mind, that he is not a creature, that he is not a mere man, but a person, in whom the fulness of the Godhead resides; for it is impossible to conceive that he could hold that dominion, and perform the various acts which it implies, unless he were possessed of divine perfections. It is certainly necessary, that he should be acquainted with all his subjects, and all their circumstances; that he should be capable of conducting the whole system of affairs with order, and to its destined ends; and that he should be able to keep every being in his proper place, to restrain wayward movements or confine them within due bounds, and to make the mightiest and the most refractory bend to his purpose. In other words, he could not govern the universe without infinite knowledge, infinite wisdom, and infinite power. It would be a mockery to place a creature upon the throne, to whom the extent of his kingdom would be unknown, and whose proceedings would be at one time marked by error, and at another embarrassed by opposition. The duties arising from the relation in which we stand to him as our Sovereign, are such as we owe to him alone, who is God over all. We are bound by express command, to trust in him, to worship him, to obey him, to submit to his disposal, to expect from his lips the sentence which will decide our eternal state; and what more do we owe to the Father? And we have already seen, that it is His will, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour himself. Unitarians get quit of this argument, by the usual expedient of figures, as if the sacred writers, as soon as they began to speak of our Saviour, had been hurried away by some unaccountable impulse, into the region of metaphor, simile, and hyperbole. All this magnificent language concerning his kingdom, we must be careful not to understand literally, lest we fall into the great error of supposing, that he is actually placed at the head of affairs. Let us not be so simple as to adopt this idea. Nothing more is meant than the moral influence of the Gospel; and the reign of Christ is like the reign of any other man over his followers, who have embraced his doctrines, and submitted to his institutions. "The subjection of all mankind to the rules of piety and virtue delivered by Christ, is shadowed out under the imagery of a mighty king, to whom all power was given in heaven and earth." So say our antagonists; but they only will receive this interpretation, who have been given over to strong delusion, to believe a lie.

I have laid before you a variety of arguments, by which the Divinity of Jesus Christ is evinced; and in doing so, I have endeavoured to obviate such objections as are made to the passages quoted. I shall conclude by bringing under your notice some other objections, with answers to them.

It is objected, that the supposed Divinity of Christ is inconsistent with the doctrine of the Unity of God; and those passages which affirm that there is one God, and that there is no God besides him, are confidently brought forward to refute our opinion. But we know those passages as well as our opponents, and are fully persuaded of the truth which they inculcate. We hold at the same time, the Unity of God and the Divinity of Christ, without at all thinking that we are liable to the charge of self-contradiction; for our doctrine is, not that the Father is one God, and the Son is another, but that, while there is only one Divine nature, the Father and the Son are distinct persons in that nature. It is absurd, therefore, to allege the acknowledged Unity of God as subversive of our doctrine, till it is proved, and not merely asserted, that personal distinctions in one Divine nature are impossible. For a more complete answer to this objection, I refer to our illustration of the Trinity.

It is objected, that whatever may be implied in the title or designation, Son of God, it is a fair conclusion from it, that he is not God himself. It is admitted, that the son of a man as such, is also a man; why is it denied, that the Son of God is also God? We grant,

* Acts xx. 28. † 1 Cor. ii. 8. ‡ Heb. vii. 28. ‖ Phil. ii. 6—11.

indeed, that the two cases are different, because a man and his son are two separate beings, have the same specific, but not the same numerical nature; but the title leads us to conceive, that he who is the Son of God, has the nature of God, and, since the nature cannot be divided or multiplied, that the same nature is common to both. The title implies a community of essence; and all that we can legitimately infer from it is, that he is a distinct person from the Father.

It is objected, that our Lord excludes himself from the honour of divinity, in these words, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."* But surely a single passage, instead of being set in opposition to an hundred other passages, should be explained, if possible, in consistency with them. We grant that our Lord would have denied his own Divinity, if he had said that the Father only is God, to the exclusion of himself; but it is quite evident that he merely distinguishes his Father from other pretenders to Divinity. He does not say "Thou only art the true God," but "Thou art the only true God." When the Scripture calls the Father, "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords," the design is obviously to except, not Jesus Christ, but the "lords many" of the Gentiles; and accordingly, Jesus Christ receives the same title in other places, being designated "King of kings, and Lord of lords," and the "Prince of the kings of the earth." "The Socinian argues," says Bishop Middleton, "as if in our Saviour's days there had been the same controversy about the *nature* and *essence* of the One True God, which arose afterwards; whereas the dispute then was, whether there were a *plurality* of Gods or only *One:* The Jews held the latter opinion, and the whole Pagan world the former. Our Saviour, therefore, keeping, if I may so call it, this controversy in view, tells his hearers that eternal life is to be obtained only by a knowledge of the One True God, and of Jesus Christ, thus at once directing the mind to the truths both of natural and of revealed religion; and the hearers of our Lord could not possibly have understood him in any other sense. It is, therefore, perfectly frivolous to introduce this passage into the Trinitarian dispute; and the stress which has been laid on it, can be accounted for only from the extreme difficulty of giving to the opposite hypothesis any thing like the sanction of Scripture."† Besides, there is a passage in one of the Epistles of John, from which it appears that the words before us are not exclusive of the Son, because what is here affirmed of the Father, is there affirmed also of him. "And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ, This is the true God, and eternal life."‡ It is certain, that the Father is often called God, and our Saviour is mentioned, at the same time, as distinct from him. The reason is, that in the economy of redemption, the Father sustains the majesty and maintains the rights of the Godhead, while Christ acts as Mediator. By him we come to the Father, but we do not hold him, personally considered, to be subordinate. We worship the Son also; but the usual order is to draw near to the Father in the name of the Son. Keeping this economy in mind, we can easily understand the passage before us, and others of a similar nature. "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."‖

It is objected, that our Saviour himself acknowledged his inferiority to the Father, and cannot, therefore, be God in the proper sense of the term. "My Father is greater than I."§ But there is another passage which we shall do well to take into consideration at the same time. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."* The words have undergone much criticism, which it would be tedious to detail; but, whether we translate *ουχ ἁρπαγμον ἡγησατο, he thought it not robbery*, or, *he did not seize as a prey*, or catch at equality to God, the result is the same, namely, that he was really equal; for, if this had not been the case, there would have been no humility in declining to display his equality for a time; and, as an example of humility, the case is introduced. It would be a strange recommendation of the humility of a creature, to say that he did not aim at equality to God. Now we are sure, that the Scripture does not contradict itself; and hence, when two parts of it appear to be at variance, there can be no doubt that there is a mode of reconciling them, which we should endeavour to find out. Our Saviour is exhibited in two characters, as the Son of God, and as Mediator. In the former, he is described as possessing all the perfections of Deity; but in the latter, as the servant of the Father, acting in obedience to his will. In this latter character the Father was greater than he, not essentially, but economically, as he who sends is in this respect greater than he who is sent; and it is evident from the context, that this was the character in which our Saviour spoke when he declared the superiority of his Father. The subject of conversation was his ascension in human nature, his return to the Father, to receive the promised reward of his labours upon earth; and on this occasion he appeared to be inferior, as the ambassador is to his Sovereign, who confers honour upon him for the wisdom and fidelity with which he has fulfilled his commission. "Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I."

This explanation is connected with another objection founded on the assignation of a subordinate character to him, while he is described as the servant of God:—"I came—not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me."† It is certain that although two persons be of equal rank, the one may consent, for a specified time and a particular purpose, to act the part of a servant to the other, without any diminution of his dignity, and, in this case, is inferior only in office. Notwithstanding this subordination, his rights are preserved, because it is entirely voluntary, and is intended to last only for a limited period, after which he will appear in his original equality. The application is obvious to our Lord, who being in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant, and having emptied himself of his visible glory, was found in fashion as a man. Yet this humiliation, although profound, was not such as entirely to conceal his true character. While he held the place of a servant, he acted as a Lord, exercising sovereign authority over the elements, the bodies and souls of men, and the invisible world. It was evident to all who had eyes to see and minds to reflect, that he was quite different from the other messengers of God. "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and seas obey him?" In connexion with this argument, his own words have been referred to as inconsistent with his Divinity, because they are expressive of subordination and dependence:—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do."‡ But we have already considered them among the proofs of his divinity, and undoubtedly they furnish a very strong argument for it, because they are an explicit claim of omnipotence, for he immediately adds, "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."

On the same general principle, we may reply to the

* John xvii. 3.
† Middleton on the Greek Article, p. 372. ed. 1808.
‡ 1 John v. 20. ‖ 1 Cor. xiii. 6. § John xiv. 28.

* Phil. ii. 6. † John vi. 38. ‡ John v. 19.

objection, that he called God, his God, that he prayed to him, that he had a different will, saying, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."* The answer is, that, while we believe his Divinity, we hold also that he was a man, and as such stood in the same relation to God, and owed the same duties as other men; and that, having assumed the character, he acted in all things as the servant of the Father.

An objection is drawn from his answer to the person who said to him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"† The objection is this, God is good, and therefore, he who denies that this epithet ought to be applied to himself, is not God. Griesbach, whom Unitarians consider as infallible authority in settling the text, gives a different reading, "Why dost thou ask me concerning good. or the good?" But unluckily he retains the usual reading in two other gospels, and the result of his critical labours is to introduce a contradiction among the Evangelists. We may presume, that originally they all agreed, although now there is a difference in several manuscripts, particularly as this alteration of the text renders it in a great measure unmeaning. "Why callest thou me good?" Our Lord adapted his answer to the notions which the enquirer entertained of him, plainly looking upon him as merely a human teacher,—as a prophet, perhaps, but not greater than a prophet. He would not allow flattering titles to be given to men, not even to himself when he was supposed to be only one of them. What right had a man to be called good, in the full acceptation of the term, since goodness can be predicated of him alone who possessed infinite perfections? Jesus does not speak of himself agreeably to what he really is, but according to this person's apprehensions; and nothing is more unfair than to conclude that he denied his own Divinity, because he refused to be addressed in language which should be appropriated to God, by one who believed him to be a creature.

It is objected, that Jesus Christ is expressly called a man, and such passages as the following are produced, as containing an unanswerable argument against his Divinity:—"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." "Jesus Christ, a man approved of God among you by miracles." "After me cometh a man, which is preferred before me." "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth."‡ We know all these passages, and if it would serve any purpose, would lend our aid to Unitarians in collecting many others of a similar strain; but they prove only, what we are always ready to acknowledge, that our blessed Saviour was a partaker of our nature, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. They do not prove that he was a mere man, unless it be ascertained to be impossible that he, who is man, may at the same time be God. This our adversaries affirm; but we demand demonstration which they are unable to give. It was foretold that a "virgin should conceive and bear a son," or that the Messiah should be a man; but it was added, that his name should be Immanuel, which signifies, God with us.‖

As for the assertion, that if we maintain the Divinity of Christ, we must admit that the Deity was born, was imprisoned in the body of an infant, and suffered pain and death, it is unworthy of a serious refutation. Let Unitarians indulge, if they will, in coarse and vulgar declamation, which can injure only themselves, and is a pitiful attempt to prejudice the minds of men against a cause which their arguments have failed to overthrow. They know well that we disclaim such consequences, and that our doctrine stands clear of them. The Deity was not born, but the man was born who is united to the Deity; the Deity was not imprisoned in the body of an infant, but He was a child in his human nature, who, in his Divine, fills heaven and earth; the Deity did not die, but we have the authority of Scripture for saying, that when Jesus of Nazareth suffered, the Lord of glory was crucified.

* Matt. xxvi. 39. † Matt. xix. 16.
‡ 1 Tim. ii. 5. Acts ii. 22. John i. 30. John viii. 40.
‖ Isa. vii. 14.

LECTURE XXXIII.

ON THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Proof of the Personality of the Holy Spirit—Reason of the name, Spirit—His Divinity inferred from the ascription to him of the Names, the Perfections, and Works of God; and from the Worship rendered to him—The Relation of the Holy Spirit to the other two Persons of the Godhead—Difference between the Eastern and Western Churches.

Having endeavoured to prove, in some preceding lectures, the Deity of our blessed Redeemer, I purpose to lay before you the proofs of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost.

I begin with observing, that, although conclusive, they are not so numerous as in the former case; but it is not necessary that they should be equally ample. The great difficulty in admitting the Divinity of any other person but the Father, arises from the doctrine of the Unity, with which a plurality of subsistences in the Godhead seems to be inconsistent. As among men, three distinct persons, although partakers of a common nature, are not numerically one in essence, we are apt to apply this analogy to the Divine nature, and to think nothing clearer than that the supposition of two or more persons infers its division into as many parts. Trinitarians have, on this account, been frequently pronounced to be Tritheists. The only way of removing this difficulty, is to shew from the infallible declarations of Scripture, that however incomprehensible the doctrine is, and whatever repugnance may be imagined in it to the dictates of reason, the Son is God, as well as the Father. We thus oppose positive proof to presumptions, and set aside the bold and ignorant conclusions of our finite minds concerning an infinite essence, by the express testimony of Him to whom that essence belongs. If we succeed in establishing the fact that the Son is God, we prepare the way for the admission of a third person in the Trinity, not without proof, but upon evidence not equally luminous and diversified. The great objection against believing that there is a plurality in the Divine nature, is removed by shewing that it is reconcileable with the Unity, because it actually exists; and, being compelled to acknowledge the Deity of the Son, we are the more easily persuaded to acknowledge that of the Spirit. My meaning will be illustrated by reminding you, that it would require more evidence to convince us of a first fact different from any which we had experienced, and therefore apparently incredible, than it would require to convince us of a second fact of the same kind, although, with respect to the second, we should still demand that the evidence be sufficient. This I consider as the reason why the Scriptures, while they teach the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, do not speak so fully upon it as upon the Divinity of the Son.

The point which it is necessary to consider, in the first place, is the personality of the Spirit. In other words we must inquire whether he is a person, intelligent and active, or merely, as some affirm, an influence, virtue, or divine operation. It is admitted, that this is sometimes the meaning of the word, Spirit, in the Scriptures; or that, by a metonomy, the name is used to denote the effect which the Spirit produces upon the soul. Thus, the passages which speak of the "pouring out" of the Spirit, of his being "received,"

and of being "filled" with him, have been understood to signify nothing more, than that miraculous or sanctifying gifts are bestowed upon men. But, allowing that this view of such passages is just, I observe, that there are many places of Scripture in which he is manifestly spoken of as a person, or properties and actions are ascribed to him, which could be predicated only of a person. Understanding and volition are assigned to him; the first, when he is said to "know the things of God," and to "search all things, yea, even the deep things of God;"* the second, in the following words: "But all these," that is, the gifts enumerated in the preceding verses, "worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."† Affections are figuratively attributed to him as well as to the Father, when, for example, we are exhorted not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God."‡ Who ever heard of the grief of a quality? We are informed, that "the Spirit maketh intercession for the saints with groanings which cannot be uttered;" ‖ and we can understand, it has been remarked, what are interceding persons, but have no apprehension of interceding and groaning qualities. "The Comforter," says our Lord, "which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."§ "When the Comforter is come—he shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness."¶ "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."** In this passage, he is represented as performing many personal acts. He teaches the disciples of Christ, and enables them to recollect what they had heard from the lips of their Master; he testifies of Christ as literally as the Apostles testified of him; he guides believers into the truth; he speaks what he has heard; he gives them the knowledge of future events.

It is acknowledged by the adversaries of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, that, in these and other passages, which might have been mentioned, he is spoken of as a person; but they evade their force by alleging that, in the style of the Scriptures, personal properties and actions are sometimes ascribed to things. Hence it is said of charity, that it suffers long and is kind, envies not, vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, seeks not its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil,†† &c. These things are attributed to charity, which is a quality, because they are true of the charitable man. In like manner, the Holy Ghost is represented as performing personal acts, although he is not a person, but the power or virtue of the Father, because it is the Father who performs these acts by his own power, which is called the Holy Ghost. But this answer, however plausible, is not satisfactory. It might be worthy of attention, if all the acts which are attributed to the Spirit, might be performed by the power of the Father; but, if some of those acts are such as cannot be predicated of the Father, if he cannot be said to do by his own power all that is done by the Spirit, then it follows, that the Holy Ghost is a person. There is nothing in the account of charity, which is not descriptive of the charitable man; but there are some things affirmed of the Holy Ghost, which are not true of the Father; and hence it appears that he is personally distinct from him.

To make intercession, is the act or work of a person, and is attributed to the Spirit, who "makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.‡‡ It is plain that he makes intercession for them to the Father, and equally plain that it would be absurd to speak of the Father as making intercession to himself. With this absurdity the hypothesis of our opponents is chargeable, because they maintain that the Spirit is merely the power or operation of the Father; but, upon our supposition, every thing is clear, because it is one person who intercedes with another. To come in consequence of a commission received from another, is a personal act, and is attributed to the Spirit in the passages quoted above. But it could not be said of the Father, that he comes as the messenger or missionary of another, for there is no other by whom he can be sent; and there would be an evident impropriety and confusion in representing him as coming in the name of the Son, while the Son is uniformly described as coming in his name; not as sending him, but as sent by him. If any man shall suppose the meaning to be, that the Father sends his power by the authority, and under the direction of his Son, and that his power, thus sent, teaches, guides, and compels, he must admit, that he has made a discovery which requires no small degree of ingenuity, and that a book, to understand which such an unnatural interpretation is necessary, is written in defiance of the ordinary rules of composition, and apparently with an intention. Again the Spirit is said to speak and hear; but these personal acts are attributed to him in a sense in which they cannot be attributed to the Father. *To hear*, when affirmed of him, signifies that he is commissioned by the Son to make certain communications concerning him to the world. "He shall receive of mine."* But how could such a thing be affirmed of the Father? The Spirit does not speak of himself, but speaks what he hears.† But the Father does every thing of himself; and therefore it is not true that the Holy Ghost is said to do these things because he is the power of the Father. It is plain, therefore, since acts are attributed to the Spirit which cannot be attributed to the Father, that the attempt to evade the argument from the passages formerly cited, is abortive; and that the Holy Ghost is not a quality or energy, but has a personal subsistence.

It may be proper, in this place, to inquire into the reason of the name or designation which is appropriated to the third person of the Trinity. He cannot be called the Spirit, on account of the spirituality of his essence; for as it is common to all the persons, one of them could not be denominated from it more than the others.—"God is a Spirit." Whoever, therefore, has assigned this as the reason of the name, has given a proof of inaccurate thinking. *Spirit* is a Latin word adopted into our language, and synonimous with the Greek word, πνευμα. Both literally signify, *breath* or *wind*. There cannot be conceived any allusion to their original meaning, when they are applied to the Divine essence, or to angelical beings; but breath has been supposed to be alluded to, when the third person in the Godhead is called the Spirit. This word is understood to refer to the mode of his subsistence, of which we shall afterwards speak, and which is usually termed *procession*, (from the words of our Lord, which we shall soon have occasion to quote) but by the Schoolmen was named *spiration*. As the second person is said to have been "begotten," so the third is said to have "proceeded," as the breath proceeds from the mouth. This idea is supposed to be authorised by the action of our Saviour, who "breathed upon his disciples, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."‡ The Spirit is the breath of the Almighty. I make a similar remark upon the epithet, holy, as upon the term, spirit, that it is very inaccurate to suppose that it denotes the holiness of his nature, because holiness, being a property of the divine essence which belongs equally to all the persons, cannot be attributed to one of them by way

* 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. † 1 Cor. xii. 11. ‡ Eph. iv. 30.
‖ Rom. viii. 26. § John xiv. 26. ¶ John xv. 26, 27.
** John xvi. 13, 14. †† 1 Cor. xiii. 4, &c. ‡‡ Rom. viii. 27.

* John xvi. 14 † Ibid. 13. ‡ John xx. 22.

of eminence or distinction. It would be as improper as always to call one of them wise, or almighty, or just, or good, while no such adjunct was connected with the names of the others. There can be little doubt, that the epithet, holy, refers to his official character. He is the Author of all the holiness which adorns the creation, and particularly in the economy of redemption he sustains the character of the Sanctifier: "We are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."* He comes forth from the Father, to restore his image in the soul of man; and all the virtues and graces are the effects of his mighty operations.

Having proved the personality of the Holy Ghost, I proceed to inquire, whether there be evidence in the Scriptures that he is a Divine person, and not a creature, as some who admitted his existence have affirmed. The author of this heresy was Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople in the fourth century, who maintained, that the Spirit was not a partaker of the same honours with the Father and the Son, but was their *minister and servant*, διακονος και ὑπηρετης, as the angels are. It is thus that his doctrine is stated by Sozomen, in his Ecclesiastical History.†

I shall begin with shewing you, that the same names are given to the Spirit, which are given to the Father and the Son. JEHOVAH, you know, is the incommunicable name; and, importing underived, independent, and immutable existence, it does not admit of application to a creature. The evidence is not so distinct as in the case of our Saviour; but, that the Spirit is called JEHOVAH, may be inferred from the following passages. Compare Exodus xvii. 7, with Heb. iii. 9. In the former place, it is said, that "the name of the place was called Massah and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel and because they tempted JEHOVAH, saying, is JEHOVAH among us, or not?" In the latter you read, "wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the day of temptation, when your fathers tempted me and proved me." Compare, again, Isaiah vi. 8—10, with Acts xxviii. 5. "I heard the voice of JEHOVAH saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The prophet answered, "Here am I, send me. And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, and understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes." Now, observe how the Apostle Paul quotes the passage: "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive," &c. Compare, once more, Jeremiah xxxi. 31—34, with Heb. x. 15—17. The passages are too long to be quoted; but, in them, as in those already recited, what is spoken by JEHOVAH in the Prophet, is said by the Apostle to have been spoken by the Holy Ghost. I do not affirm, that the argument from these passages is perfectly conclusive, and particularly from the passage in Isaiah, which is expressly applied to our Saviour by the Evangelist John; but the regular substitution of the Holy Ghost for JEHOVAH in them all, affords some ground at least, for believing that he is entitled to the former name, and, consequently, is that mysterious Being, who comprehends in himself the past, the present, and the future.

That the Holy Ghost is called God, I shall prove from two passages. The first is in the fifth Chapter of the Acts, where Peter, having said to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" asks again, "Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God." According to Peter, to lie to the Holy Ghost, is to lie to God; to lie to the Holy Ghost is not to lie to man, because the Holy Ghost is not man; and not to lie to an angel, because the Holy Ghost is not an angel; nor to lie to any creature, because the Holy Ghost is not a creature; but to lie to God, because the Holy Ghost is God. If the Spirit were not God, the Apostle might have said, "thou hast not lied unto the Holy Ghost, but unto God," for this would have been the proper manner of distinguishing them, and also of pointing out the greatness of his sin. But, since he first told him his sin, which was lying to the Holy Ghost, and then declared its aggravation, that he had not lied unto men but to God, it is plain that the Holy Ghost, to whom he lied, is God. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul says to them, "Know ye not, that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"* and in another place, "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"† From both passages it is plain, that the reason why they were the temple of God was, that the Holy Ghost dwelt in them. But the inference would not be just, if the Holy Ghost were a creature; they might be his temple, and not be the temples of God. A temple is the habitation of the Deity; but there is no way in which we are his habitation, except by the presence of his Spirit. Now, if the presence of the Spirit is the presence of God, it follows, that the Spirit is God. It is evident, that he is so denominated by the Apostle, who in one verse calls believers the temple of the Holy Spirit, and in another verse, the temple of God.

The next argument for the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, is founded upon the ascription of Divine perfections to him. Where the qualities or properties are found, there is the essence to which they belong. He is represented as possessing the attribute of eternity in the following words: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?"‡ There is a difference of opinion about the words, "the eternal Spirit," by which some understand the Divine nature of Christ, through which he offered himself, that is, through which his oblation was rendered infinitely valuable. But his Divine nature is not so expressed in any other passage of Scripture: this sense of the phrase is not the natural one, or the sense which would first present itself to our minds; and the connexion does not necessarily lead to it, but rather suggests the idea of the Holy Ghost, through whose sanctifying influences he offered himself without spot, or his human nature was made a pure immaculate sacrifice. He is the eternal Spirit, from everlasting to everlasting God. —Another attribute of Deity, is immensity, or omnipresence, which, if I may speak so, is a modification of immensity, or the infinite essence of the Deity considered in relation to the system of created things. God is present in every part of the universe. It is certain, therefore, that the Spirit is God, for these are the words of the Psalmist: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there: If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."‖ Wherever God is, the Spirit is. The Father and the Spirit co-exist throughout all time, and in all space.—A third Divine perfection, of which the Spirit is possessed, is omniscience. "The Spirit," says Paul, "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."§ That searching here signifies knowing, is evident from the preceding part of the verse, in which it is said that God had revealed to the Apostle the mysteries of salvation by the Spirit; and from the next verse, in which Paul obviously intends to explain his meaning: "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."¶ Om-

* Titus iii. 5. † Lib. iv. c. 26.

* 1 Cor. iii. 16. † 1 Cor. vi. 19. ‡ Heb. ix. 14.
‖ Ps. cxxxix. 7—10. § 1 Cor. ii. 10. ¶ Ib. 11.

niscience is expressly ascribed to him, when he is said to search or know all things; but lest any person should suspect that these are only created things, he adds, yea, the deep things of God, the secrets with which none was acquainted but himself. When the Apostle asks, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?"* we must answer, no man knows it, nor any angel; but it is known to the Spirit, and therefore he is God.—I might mention also, almighty power; but the illustration of this particular will be given under the next division, to which I proceed.

The third argument for the Divinity of the Spirit, is taken from the works which he performs, and which presuppose the Worker to be omnipotent. Some passages of Scripture represent him as concerned in Creation: "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."† As the original word signifies both spirit and wind, some have supposed that nothing more is meant by the inspired historian, than that a mighty wind, in the Hebrew idiom a wind of God, agitated the newly created chaos. Wind is the atmosphere in motion; but, it is questionable whether the atmosphere existed at this time, and its production seems rather to have been the work of the second day, when the firmament was made; for the firmament, or expanse, as the word may be rendered, seems to be the air, from the office assigned to it, namely, to divide the waters from the waters. This separation is effected by the atmosphere, which bears aloft the water that has been exhaled from the ocean and the surface of the earth. If these remarks are just, it was not a wind, but the Spirit who moved upon the face of the deep; and, whatever is implied in this motion, it is certain that he was active in the formation of the material system. I quote another passage from the Psalms: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth;" or rather, "by the Spirit of his mouth."‡ The Fathers thought (and many moderns are of the same opinion) that this verse refers to the co-operation of all the persons of the Trinity in the creation. The Word of the Lord, is not his simple command, but the Logos of the New Testament, his essential Word, by whom the Father made the worlds; and the breath of his mouth, is the spirit of his mouth, the Divine person proceeding from him, of whose agency in this work Moses has given us a general account. By him the host of heaven was made, comprehending the angels of light, and the glorious orbs which shine in the firmament. This sense of the words agrees with another passage in Job, where it is said, that "by his Spirit, God hath garnished the heavens,"‖ or adorned them with all their splendour. That Providence also is his work, has been inferred from the following words; "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth."§ Creatures fade and die when their Maker withdraws his support; but as soon as the Spirit, the great vivifying principle, the Author of life natural and spiritual, imparts his influences, they revive.—But I proceed to remark, that miracles are represented as performed by his power: "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."¶ "To another are given the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles;—all these worketh that one and self-same Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will."** A miracle is a suspension or alteration of the laws of nature, which God established in the beginning, and over which none has control but himself. It is as impossible for a creature to work a real miracle, as it is to create a world. We say, indeed, that they were performed by Prophets and Apostles; but we speak loosely, and according to appearance, for they were only the instruments by which superior power was exerted, and the real Worker of all miracles was God. If, then, miracles were wrought by the Spirit, he is greater than any creature, because the person is manifestly Divine who possesses the attribute of omnipotence.—Lastly, the resurrection of the dead, which is appropriated to God in the Scriptures, is ascribed to him. The true God is called "God who quickéneth the dead;" and no person ever supposed that any created power is capable of reuniting the dust of the grave in it original form, and restoring the principle of life. This, however, the Holy Ghost will do at the last day. "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."*

The last argument for the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, is founded on the religious worship which is given to him. We are baptized in his name, as well as in that of the Father and the Son. His equality in dignity is declared by his association with them in this solemn act of religion. It is performed by his authority, as well as by theirs; and we are dedicated as expressly to his service, as to that of the other persons of the Trinity. We have an example of prayer to him in the following words, which are still used in the solemn benediction of the church: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."† Here, he is acknowledged as the source of spiritual blessings, as well as the Father and the Son, and is invoked in the same spirit of devotion. It is vain to call this merely a wish; it is as distinctly a prayer as any other which occurs in the Epistles; and there would be no question about its nature, if there were no design to evade the evidence of his personal dignity. The words of John, in the beginning of the Revelation, are also considered as a prayer to the Spirit: "Grace be unto you, and peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the First begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth."‡ The Father and the Son are distinctly mentioned; but who are the seven spirits that are conjoined with them? If you say that they are created spirits, I would call upon you to produce an instance in which a creature is thus associated with God, and, as in the present case, is placed between two Divine persons as their equal. Besides, I would ask, what grace and peace a creature has to bestow, that he should be called upon to extend his favour to the church; and whether idolatry would not be carried to the greatest possible height, if a creature were set upon the throne of the living God, addressed in the same invocation, and pronounced to be equally able to bless us? Nothing more needs to be said, to prove that the seven spirits which are before the throne are not created spirits. It appears, then, that they cannot be understood to mean any other than the Holy Ghost. If you ask why he is represented as Seven Spirits, I answer, that Seven is a favorite number in the Scriptures, and seems to be the number of perfection; and that this representation was probably intended to signify that the influences of the Holy Ghost are inexhaustible, and are suited to all the exigencies of the people of God. Perhaps the number alludes to the seven churches of Asia, to which the introductory chapters of this book are addressed.

To sum up the arguments which have been advanced in support of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost: if he is designated by names peculiar to God, if Divine perfections are ascribed to him, if he has performed such works as manifestly surpass created power, and if reli-

* 1 Cor. ii. 16. † Gen. i. 2. ‡ Ps. xxxiii. 6.
‖ Job xxvi. 13. § Ps. civ. 30 ¶ Matt. xii. 28.
** 1 Cor. xii. 9—11.

* Rom. viii. 11. † 2 Cor. xiii. 14. ‡ Rev. i. 4, 5.

gious worship is addressed to him, we are warranted to affirm that he is not a created spirit, but God over all, blessed for ever.

It remains to speak of the relation of the Holy Ghost to the other persons of the Godhead. His relation to the Father is called his procession from him; and the term is founded upon these words of our Saviour:—"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father,"—ὁ παρα του πατρος εκπορευεται,—"he shall testify of me."* Hence the Greeks call it εκπορευσις,† and sometimes προοδος.‡ No man can tell, what "proceeding from the Father" means; it is equally unintelligible as is the generation of the Son. Attempts have been made to explain both terms; but, in doing so, ideas borrowed from material substances have been generally applied to the incomprehensible nature of a spiritual Being. The generation of the Son, and the procession of the Spirit, have been understood to import that both "received their essence" from the Father. This mode of expression is common in the writings of the Fathers, and has been adopted from them by many modern Divines. I acknowledge that I am unable to conceive what idea they affix to the words: but, whether they be mere words without signification or not, they seem to suggest a notion incompatible with the absolute eternity and perfect equality of all the persons of the Godhead. If the Divine essence was communicated to the Son and the Spirit, the Father must be conceived as prior to both, whatever ingenuity may be displayed in talking of eternal emanations, and proving that the existence of the rays of the sun is co-eval with that of the sun himself. The subject is beyond the reach of our faculties; and it is presumptuous to attempt to explain it, especially by the introduction of terms which either mean nothing, or are calculated to mislead. We do not know what is the procession of the Spirit. Let us be sensible of our ignorance and acknowledge it, remembering, that as this is our duty, so it is more honourable than to indulge in vain babbling, and to darken counsel by words without knowledge. It is a proof of the folly of this mode of expression, that, being used with respect to the Spirit as well as to the Son, it makes the relation of both to the Father to be the same, while the Scripture plainly states a distinction between them, saying, that the one was begotten and the other proceeded. God must speak to us in our own language; and if he is pleased to give us any information respecting the mysteries of his essence, he must do so by terms to which we are accustomed. But it would be absurd to suppose, that they bear their usual sense in their new application. The utmost that can be conceived is an analogy, and that too a very faint one between things finite and infinite. It is therefore a part of wisdom to abstain from explanations and commentaries, and to confine ourselves to the words of inspiration.

The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father. But it is no where said, that he proceeds from the Son; and hence it has been a subject of inquiry and dispute, whether he stands in the same relation to him as to the Father. The Greek Fathers strictly adhered to the language of Scripture, and affirmed, that the Spirit proceeds from the Father, but did not say, that he proceeds from the Son. They, however, did not hesitate to say, that he "receives" from the Son. This expression the Latins understood to imply the same thing which they meant by procession, namely, that the Spirit received his essence from the Son; and accordingly they did not hesitate to make use of the term, when speaking of the Spirit as well as of the Father. Their words were different, but their ideas were substantially the same. But as this was one of the points which afterwards divided the Eastern and Western Churches, it is necessary to inform you how the controversy arose.

After Macedonius had vented his new heresy, denying the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, the Council of Constantinople, A. D. 381, judged it necessary to make an addition to the article of the Nicene creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost;" which was enlarged thus, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Author of life, who proceeds from the Father." This creed was received by the Catholic Church; and it was afterwards enacted by the Council of Ephesus, that no addition should be made to it. But in process of time the question began to be discussed in the West, whether the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Son as well as the Father; and it being decided that he did, the new article was inserted in the creed by the Latins;—"*Credimus in Spiritum Sanctum ex Patre Filioque procedentem.*"* Hence, a violent controversy arose between them and the Greeks; which, being heightened by other grounds of dispute, terminated in their open separation from the communion of each other; the Greeks condemning the Latins for adding to the Creed an article contrary to the authority of the Councils, and the truth of which they suspected or denied; and the Latins obstinately retaining it, because it was sanctioned by the Pope, and expressed in their opinion a doctrine agreeable to Scripture, which the Greeks themselves had once admitted in different words.

In adding the words "*Filioque*"† to the Creed, the Latins thought themselves justified by plain Scripture reasoning. Although the procession of the Spirit from the Son is not literally asserted, yet it is implied in some things which are said of him in relation to the Son. The same expressions, which are used concerning the Holy Ghost in reference to the Father, because he proceeds from him, are used in reference to the Son; and hence it seems warrantable to conclude that the reason is the same. The Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of the Father, because he proceeds from him: "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."‡ But he is also called the Spirit of the Son; and there seems, therefore, to be no valid ground why we should not believe that the same relation is expressed in the one case and in the other: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."‖ Again, the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father, because he proceeds from him,—it being suitable to the order of subsistence in the Godhead, that the Father should send him, not that he should send the Father. Our Lord speaks of him as the Comforter, whom the Father would send. But he is also sent by the Son:—"When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you." "If I depart, I will send him unto you."§ If his mission by the Father is the consequence of his procession from him, may we not conclude, upon the same ground, that he also proceeds from the Son?

Such are the reasons assigned by the Western Church for deviating from the language of the East and of the ancient creeds. There is a degree of probability in the reasoning; but at the same time candour requires me to say, that, as we do not know what procession means, we perhaps venture too far when we positively affirm, that the expressions which we have quoted are equivalent to that term. It is only when we thoroughly understand a subject, that we have authority to pronounce that different modes of expression convey exactly the same idea. I presume that no man will affirm that he is thus qualified to decide the present controversy. He

* John xv. 26. † Procession. ‡ A going forth.

* We believe in the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son.

† And the Son. ‡ Matt. x. 20.

‖ Gal. iv. 6. Rom. viii. 9. § John xv. 26, and xvi. 7.

who is called the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of the Son, does certainly appear to stand in the same relation to both; and, if no other language had been used, there could have been but one opinion on the subject. But, when we find that this person is said to proceed from the Father, and is not said to proceed from the Son, we need not be surprised that some should hesitate whether it can be truly affirmed that he proceeds from the Son. If they acknowledge that he is true God, and is the Spirit of the Son, their refusing to say that he proceeds from him, should be accounted a venial error, and, if censured at all, should be censured with gentleness, as having arisen from a principle, which cannot justly be condemned, of scrupulous adherence to the language of Scripture. The Greeks might be wrong, in their violent condemnation of the Latins for adding the words *Filioque* to the creed; but the Latins were at least as culpable, in accusing the Greeks of heresy, because they preferred their ancient phraseology. The Latins had arguments on their side, deduced from the interpretation of particular passages; the Greeks had on their side the express language of Scripture itself. It was a controversy which, if it could not be avoided, both parties should have carried on with mildness, and in which they should have mutually exercised the spirit of forbearance. There was no heresy on either side; both were sound in the doctrine of the Trinity, and their difference related to a point which neither understood. Legitimate inferences from Scripture, are of the same authority with Scripture itself. But, when the inference is attended with a degree of doubt; when it is deduced from premises which are rather assumed than proved, it may be proposed to the consideration of others, but their assent to it should not be imperatively demanded. It may be true that the phrase, "the Spirit of the Father," is equivalent to the phrase, "proceedeth from the Father;" but, as this cannot be demonstrated, it would have been wiser not to have made a doctrine, founded upon the idea that they are equivalent, an article of faith. We have seen the grounds upon which it rests; but, while there is reason to believe that the Spirit proceeds from the Son, we should deem it rash to condemn the man who would not assent to this proposition, for this reason, that he could not find it so expressed in the Scriptures.

LECTURE XXXIV.

ON THE DECREES OF GOD.

Connexion between the Knowledge and Decrees of God—Nature and Objects of the Divine Decrees—They are Eternal, Wise, Free, Absolute, and Unconditional—Unconditional Decrees not inconsistent with human Responsibility.

Having spoken of God and his perfections, of the Holy Trinity, and the Divinity of the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I now proceed to speak of the Acts of the Divine nature.

Of these, according to systematic Divines, there is a threefold distinction. First, there are immanent and intrinsic acts which have no respect to any thing external. Such are the acts which are implied in the generation of the Son, and the procession of the Spirit: and such are the acts of the Divine persons towards each other, of which their mutual love may be mentioned as an instance. The Divine nature, although single, is not solitary; it is the soul, if I may speak so, of communion more intimate and delightful than the closest fellowship among creatures; and thus it enjoys in itself a perpetual source of infinite blessedness. Secondly, there are extrinsic and transitive acts, which are not *in* God, but *from* God efficiently, and in creatures subjectively; or, to express the matter more intelligibly, are exertions of his power terminating upon creatures as the objects of them. To create, to uphold, and to govern, are acts of this kind. Thirdly, there are immanent and intrinsic acts in God, which have a respect or relation to things without him; and these are his Decrees, to which I shall direct your attention in this lecture.

The decrees of God are his purpose or determination with respect to future things. I call them purpose or determination, in the singular number, because there was only one act of His infinite mind about future things; although we speak as if there had been many, in reference to the process of our own minds, which form successive resolutions, as thoughts and occasions arise, or in reference to the objects of his decree, which being many, seem to require a distinct purpose for each. But, an infinite understanding does not proceed by steps, as they necessarily do whose knowledge, like light, advances by degrees, and whose ideas come in a train; it perceives all things by a single glance. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."*

This seems to be the place, in which it is proper to introduce a distinction, which is usually made, of the knowledge of God unto the knowledge of simple intelligence, or natural and indefinite knowledge, *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*; and the knowledge of vision, *scientia visionis*, which is also called free and definite. The former is the knowledge of things possible, and is called indefinite, because God has defined or determined nothing concerning them. God knows all possible causes, and all their possible effects. The latter is the knowledge of future things, of things which shall take place, and is called definite, because their existence is determined. They differ, you see, in their object; that of the former, being all things that might exist; that of the latter, being only such things as are to exist. The first kind of knowledge is founded on the omnipotence of God; he knows all things which his power could perform. The second kind of knowledge is founded on his will or decree, by which things pass from a state of possibility to a state of futurition. God knew of innumerable worlds and orders of creatures which his power could have brought into being; but he knew of them, not as things which were to be, but as things which might be. But, he knew of the universe which actually is, as certainly to have a future existence, because he had determined to create it. Lastly, these two kinds of knowledge differ in their order, because the former preceded his decree, and the latter is subsequent to it. Of the things which his Almighty power could accomplish, he purposed to do this and not that; and consequently, the one became certain, and the other remained only possible.

There is a third kind of knowledge, which some Divines have ascribed to God, and which is called *scientia media*, because it lies in the middle between the two kinds already explained, and differs from both. It differs from natural and indefinite knowledge, because it is conversant not about possible, but about future things; it differs from free and definite knowledge, because it is not founded upon the decree of God, but upon the actions of his creatures, which he foresees. He knows how men will act if placed in particular circumstances, if endowed with certain talents, if favoured with certain opportunities, if exposed to certain temptations. His knowledge is not the effect of his own purpose, but of the foresight of their character and condition; it is not derived from himself, but from his creatures. The design of introducing this distinction, was to give support to the doctrine, that the divine decrees which relate to men are conditional; or that, for

* Acts xv. 18.

example, men were chosen to eternal life upon the foresight of their faith and obedience; and hence it has been strenuously opposed by the advocates of unconditional decrees. They have endeavoured to shew, that it is a useless distinction, this middle science being comprehended in the knowledge of simple intelligence, or the knowledge of all possible things; that it solves no difficulties, but leaves the question, how God is not the author of sin? unanswered, since he placed Adam in circumstances in which he knew certainly that he would fall; that it renders God dependent upon his creatures, from whom part of his knowledge is derived, and by whose conduct his determinations are regulated; and that it exempts men from the control of their Maker, leaving them to act independently of any act of his will, or any prior arrangement of his wisdom, solely in the exercise of their own liberty. Some of these objections appear to have weight; but, perhaps, this *media scientia* might be so explained as to free it from them, and render it quite consistent with orthodoxy. Whether you give a distinct name to it or not, you might, one should think, say with the utmost safety, that God, whose understanding is infinite, knew in what manner men would act if placed in particular circumstances, and did place them in such circumstances, with a view to accomplish the design of his administration.

You will understand, by what has been said, the connexion between the knowledge and the decrees of God. When he decreed, he selected, if I may speak so, from the infinity of possible things, those which his wisdom judged proper to be done; and the things thus selected were henceforth future and certain.

No man will deny, that there are divine decrees, who believes that God is an intelligent being, and considers what this character implies. An intelligent being is one who knows and judges, who purposes ends and devises means, who acts from design, conceives a plan, and then proceeds to execute it. Fortune was worshipped as a goddess by the ancient heathens, and was represented as blind, to signify that she was guided by no fixed rule, and distributed her favours at random. Surely no person of common sense, not to say piety, will impute procedure so irrational to the Lord of universal nature. As he knew all things that his power could accomplish, there were undoubtedly reasons, which determined him to do one thing, and not to do another; and his choice, which was founded upon those reasons, was his decree. Upon this subject, we cannot avoid speaking of him after the manner of men; because, in endeavouring to conceive the acts of his mind, we necessarily refer to the operations of our own, however great is the difference between infinite and finite. When various plans are laid before us, and we prefer one to the rest, this act of our minds is a decree or purpose by which our subsequent conduct is regulated. The works of God, in like manner, necessarily presuppose a decree, as the plan of which they are the developement. It will certainly be admitted, that God intended to create the world before he actually created it; that he intended to make man before he fashioned his body, and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils; that he intended to govern the world which he had made, according to certain laws; and it will be farther admitted, that when he resolved to create the world, and to make man, and to establish laws physical and moral, he had some ultimate object in view. Having constructed a machine, and set it in motion, he knew what would be the result; and this result was the true reason, or the final cause, why the machine was constructed. This intention of the Deity is his decree. To this general idea of a decree no man can object, whatever difficulties may occur in the detail of the doctrine, because it is as simple, and as necessarily forced upon our minds, as the idea of a purpose in the mind of a wise man, preceding an enterprise in which he embarks, or a particular mode of life which he adopts. In fine, the decree of God is his will, in which the exertions of his power, and the manifestations of his other perfections, originated. When we speak of his decreeing or purposing, we mean nothing mysterious and profound, but merely, that before he acted, he willed to act, that his operations *ad extra* * were not the effects of necessity, but of counsel and design.

The Scriptures make mention of the decrees of God in many passages, and in a variety of terms. They speak of his foreknowledge, his purpose, his will, the determinate counsel of his will, his good pleasure, and his predestination: Christ, says an apostle, "was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God."† "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate."‡ "He hath made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself."‖ "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."§ It is unnecessary to multiply quotations. There are two remarks which I would make upon the language of Scripture: First, when it represents the decrees of God as his counsel, the word is not to be understood in its usual acceptation, as implying consultation with others, or reflection, comparison, the deduction of inferences from premises, and the establishment of a conclusion as the result of the previous process. This slow procedure suits our limited faculties, but the decisions of an infinite mind are instantaneous. His decrees are called his counsel, to signify that they are consummately wise. Secondly, when they are called his will, it is not meant to insinuate that they are arbitrary decisions; but merely, that in making his decrees, he was under no control, and acted according to his own sovereignty. When a man's will is the rule of his conduct, it is usually capricious and unreasonable; but wisdom is always associated with will in the divine proceedings; and accordingly his decrees are said to be the "counsel of his will."

A question has been agitated upon this subject, which is very abstruse, and of which I almost despair of being able to convey a clear idea to you, as I am not sure that I distinctly understand it. It relates to the manner in which the decrees are in God, whether essentially, or inhesively and accidentally. The first is accounted the orthodox opinion. I know not how to explain it; but it is affirmed that the decrees of God are not different from himself, and are identified with his essence, and that he never was without his decrees. If I have any glimpse of the meaning, it appears to be this, that in God there is nothing analogous to thought in man, which is not his soul itself, but an act of his soul. It is easy to put together words, which shall express this proposition; but I doubt much whether any man can affix a distinct idea to it, with whatever confidence he may repeat it. You may say that the decrees of God are God himself decreeing, and you may say the same thing of a man, that his decrees are the man himself decreeing: the decrees, however, are not more identified with the essence in the one case, than in the other. We do not indeed understand the operations of an infinite mind, and they must be very different from those of our own; but we would persuade ourselves and others that we do understand them, although it frequently happens, (and the present case, I think, is an instance,) that we darken counsel by words without knowledge. What is the meaning of decrees which are God himself? or what can we infer from the assertion, that God could not be without his decrees, but that they were as necessary as his existence, and consequently, that it was necessary that the world should be created, and all the

* Exteriorly. † Acts ii. 23. ‡ Rom. viii. 29.
‖ Eph. i. 9. § Ibid. 11.

events should happen, which have taken place, or will take place throughout an endless duration? There have been distinctions invented to support this opinion, and to answer objections; but I may spare myself and you the trouble of retailing them, as they would neither entertain nor instruct you.

The decrees of God relate to all future things without exception; whatever is done in time, was fore-ordained before the beginning of time. His purpose was concerned with every thing, whether great or small, whether good or evil; although, in reference to the latter, it may be necessary to distinguish between appointment and permission. It was concerned with things necessary, free, and contingent; with the movements of matter, which are necessary; with the volitions and actions of intelligent creatures, which are free; and with such things as we call accidents, because they take place undesignedly on our part, and without any cause which we could discover. It was concerned about our life, and our death; about our state in time, and our state in eternity. In short, the decrees of God are as comprehensive as his government, which extends to all creatures, and to all events. God did not merely decree to make man, and place him upon the earth, and then to leave him to his own uncontrolled guidance: he fixed all the circumstances in the lot of individuals, and all the particulars which will compose the history of the human race from its commencement to its close. He did not merely decree that general laws should be established for the government of the world, but he settled the application of those laws to all particular cases. Our days are numbered, and so are the hairs of our heads. We may learn what is the extent of the Divine decrees from the dispensations of Providence, in which they are executed. The care of Providence reaches to the most insignificant creatures, and the most minute events, the death of a sparrow and the fall of a hair. Some, indeed, talk of a general providence, by which I know not well what they mean, unless it be to save the Almighty the trouble of entering into details, and to burden him only with the office of upholding the general system. Hence they wisely tell us, that he takes care of the species, but not of the individuals; not perceiving that it is hardly possible to express a greater absurdity in fewer words. A species is a general name by which the common and distinguishing qualities of a number of individuals are denoted. The species is nothing but the individuals under a particular classification. How then can the species be taken care of, if the individuals be neglected? In the same way, to allude to a familiar instance, in which a man would take care of his pounds who took no care of his pence. The notion of a general, to the exclusion of a particular providence, is irrational as well as unscriptural. It is only by attending to individuals, and the regulation of minute affairs, that the business of the world can be carried on. We may say of providence, as the Psalmist says of the sun, that nothing is hidden from its heat, that its influence pervades the whole system of things. As God works all things according to the counsel of his will, we infer from his works what his counsel is, as we judge of an architect's plan by inspecting the building which was raised under his directions.

I proceed to lay before you some of the properties of the Divine decrees. And, in the first place, I remark, that they were made from eternity. This is readily granted with respect to some of the decrees, those, for example, which relate to the creation of the world and of man, and to the mission of Jesus Christ; but, it has been maintained, that those, which relate to things dependent upon the free agency of man, are made in time. This opinion, however, is so far from receiving any countenance from Scripture, that it is directly contradicted by it. It is expressly affirmed that believers were chosen in Christ, and that grace was given to them, "before the world began."* When an Apostle says, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world,"† he virtually teaches that his decrees are eternal; for his words import, that at the commencement of time the plan was arranged, according to which his works were to be executed. It is manifest that, if they had not been determined upon, they could not have been foreknown as certain. To suppose any of the Divine decrees, to be made in time, is to suppose that some new occasion has occurred, some unforeseen event or combination of circumstances has taken place, which has induced the Most High to pronounce a new sentence, or form a new resolution. If he knew from eternity all that he knows in time, no reason can be assigned why he should have delayed his arrangements so long. Temporal decrees suppose the knowledge of the Deity to be limited, and that he is receiving accessions to it in the progress of time. He comes to a resolution respecting men, after he has found what part they would act in particular circumstances. No man, who believes that the Divine understanding is infinite, comprehending the past, the present, and the future, will ever assent to the doctrine of temporal decrees. And is there any thing which God does not know? Is he ignorant of events which depend upon human volitions? No; he has foretold them in innumerable instances; prophecy is founded upon his infallible prescience, and shews that all things were certain to him from the beginning, and were so settled that they could not be changed. Although we cannot understand what is meant by identifying God's decrees with his essence, yet we have no hesitation in fixing their date in eternity.

In the second place, The divine decrees are wise. Wisdom is discovered in the selection of the most proper ends, and of the fittest means of accomplishing them. That this character belongs to the decrees of God, is evident from what we know of them. They are disclosed to us by their execution; and every proof of wisdom in the works of God, is a proof of the wisdom of the plan in conformity to which they are performed. It is indeed, but a very small part of them which falls under our observation; but, we ought to proceed here as we do in other cases, and judge of the whole by the specimen, of what is unknown, by what is known. He who perceives works of admirable skill in the parts of a machine, which he has an opportunity to examine, is naturally led to believe that the other parts are equally admirable. In this manner we should satisfy our minds, when doubts obtrude themselves upon us, and repel the objections which may be suggested by some things which we cannot reconcile to our notions of what is expedient and proper. As far as we can go, every thing is worthy of God; why should we not believe, that beyond the point which bounds our researches, there is the same order, the same beauty, the same correspondence with the Divine character and attributes? Convinced as we are by experience, that the plans of the Almighty are the result of consummate intelligence, ought we not, while we stand at the brink of the abyss which we cannot fathom, to exclaim in the language of profound reverence and humble adoration: "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"‡ Incomprehensible as are the counsels of God, we may be assured that no part of them is the effect of caprice, or of mere will, but that to his mind there appeared a sufficient reason for every thing which he purposed to do. Some have said, that as his knowledge is infinite, and his wisdom perfect, he must have discerned among possible events which was the best, and have chosen accordingly; and consequently, that the actual system of things

* Eph. i. 4. 2 Tim. i. 9. † Acts xv. 18. ‡ Rom. xi. 33.

is the best possible system. In this manner, they account for the permission of moral evil, and for the creation of such a being as man, although God foresaw that he would abuse his liberty, and involve a whole race in guilt and misery. A system pregnant with such consequences, was preferred, because it was, upon the whole, better than any other. When we reflect upon the wonderful dispensation which has resulted from the fall, and by which God is glorified in the highest, we are almost disposed to assent to this theory; but it seems to be a speculation beyond the reach of our faculties. It is an attempt to soar to a region too pure and sublime for us to breathe in it. Let us be content to move in a lower sphere, and to trace the evidences of wisdom with which we are surrounded there, and by which we shall feel this truth deeply impressed upon our minds, that God is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

In the third place, The decrees of God are free: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?"* He was alone when he made his decrees, and his determinations were influenced by no external cause. He was free to decree, or not to decree, and to decree one thing, and not another. This liberty we must ascribe to Him who is supreme, independent, and sovereign in all his dispensations. In settling the notion of human liberty, Calvinistic divines maintain against Arminians, that it does not consist in a power to act with motives, or without them, or in opposition to them; but in the power of acting according to the prevailing inclination, or according to the motive which appears strongest to the mind. Human volitions are not arbitrary, but are influenced by the previous state of the mind. A man chooses what appears to be good, and he chooses it necessarily, in this sense, that he could not do otherwise. The object of every volition, is to please himself; and to suppose a man to have any other object, that is, to will any thing which does not please him in itself, or in its circumstances, is absurd; it is to suppose him to will, and not to will at the same time. He is perfectly voluntary in his choice; but his willingness is the consequence of the view which his mind takes of the object presented to it, or of his prevailing disposition. If we apply this reasoning to God, it will follow that his decrees are not the result of mere will, but of will under the direction of wisdom; and as, in human deliberations, the strongest motive prevails, so in the Divine counsels that system of things was preferred which appeared to be best. Advance a step farther, and you will say, that God could not have chosen any other system, more than a man can act in opposition to the strongest motive, while he is feeling the full force of its influence. Observe now the consequence of the conclusion at which we have arrived. It is this, that the decrees of God could have been different from what they are. But, are we prepared to admit this conclusion? Shall we believe that God could not have made this world, in any respect, different from what it is; that he could not have placed man in such circumstances as would have prevented his fall; and that, when man had fallen, he could not have abstained from glorifying himself by his salvation? Surely we have cause to suspect the reasoning which leads to a belief so contrary to Scripture, and so injurious to the feelings of piety. God might, or might not, have created the world; he might have confirmed man in a state of holiness, as well as have permitted him to fall; he might have withheld his Son, his only-begotten Son, and left the human race to perdition; and having given his Son, he might have saved more, or saved fewer, than shall be actually redeemed by him. We are ignorant of the reasons of his choice, but we cannot persuade ourselves that they are such, that no other choice could have been made. We assert, then, that the decrees of God are free. No necessity can be supposed to influence the procedure of a self-existent and independent Being, except the necessity arising from his infinite perfections, of always acting in a manner worthy of himself. To his infinite understanding there must have appeared more than one way of doing so; and although there were undoubtedly reasons for the choice which he has made, it would be boldness, not to be vindicated from the charge of impiety, to say that he could not have adopted another.

I remark once more, that the decrees of God are absolute and unconditional. The execution of them is not suspended upon any condition which may, or may not, be performed. Here we have many opponents, Lutherans, Arminians, Jesuits; all, in a word, who have not adopted those views of the subject which are usually called Calvinistic. It is granted, that some of the decrees of God are conditional, in this sense, that something is supposed to go before the event which is the object of the decree, and that, this order being established, the one will not take place without the other. He decreed, for example, to save Paul and the companions of his voyage to Italy; but he decreed to save them only on condition that the sailors should remain in the ship.* He has decreed to save many from the wrath to come; but he has decreed to save them only if they believe in Christ, and turn by him from the error of their ways. But these decrees are conditional only in appearance. They merely state the order in which the events should be accomplished; they establish a connexion between the means and the end, but do not leave the means uncertain. When God decreed to save Paul and his companions, he decreed that the sailors should be prevented from leaving the ship; and accordingly gave Paul previous notice of the preservation of every person on board. When he decreed to save those who should believe, he decreed to give them faith; and accordingly we are informed, that those whom he predestinated he also calls into the fellowship of his Son.† That any decree is conditional in the sense of our opponents,—that it depends upon the will of man, of which he is sovereign master, so that he may will or not will as he pleases,—we deny. "My counsel," says God, "shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."‡ But he could not speak so, if his counsel depended upon a condition which might not be performed. He might desire the event for his own glory or the good of his creatures, and take measures to accomplish it; but the ultimate determination depended upon the human will, over which he had no control, it would be uncertain till the moment arrived what the issue would be. He might wish to save a particular person; but, as that person might believe, or not believe, it could not be known beforehand how he would act, and the design of God with respect to him might be frustrated. If you assert conditional decrees, you must suppose that God is ignorant of the result, that the event is not in his power, or that he has determined nothing concerning it, and has left it to chance. But "known unto him are all his works from the beginning of the world."‖ It is evident that they could not be known, if they had not been unconditionally decreed; because, on the contrary supposition, they would be the objects, not of knowledge, but of conjecture. "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."§ But this could not be, if the will of his creatures sometimes counteracted his will, if the execution of his purposes was suspended upon a co-operation which it was in their power to withhold. It will be shewn afterwards,

* Isa. xl. 13, 14.

* Acts xxvii. † Rom. viii. 30. ‡ Isa. xlvi. 10.
‖ Acts xv. 18. § Eph. i. 11.

that those acts of the human will, upon which his decrees are supposed to be suspended, are under his direction, and are comprehended in his decrees; which, as we have already observed, while they appointed the end, also provided the means.

Here we come to a question which has engaged the attention, and exercised the ingenuity, and perplexed the wits of men in every age. If God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, the whole series of events is necessary, and human liberty is taken away. Men are passive instruments in the hands of their Maker; they can do nothing but what they are secretly and irresistibly influenced to do; they are not, therefore, responsible for their actions; and God is the Author of sin. To this objection it is replied, that the divine decree is extrinsic to the human mind; that it exerts no force or influence upon our faculties; and that, while it insures the futurition of events, it leaves them to be accomplished in the exercise of our liberty. While it determines that some things should be brought to pass necessarily, it determines that other things should be brought to pass freely. God has decreed, not only that men should act, but that they should act freely, and agreeably to their rational nature. He determined the act; but men being free agents, it was possible, in respect of their liberty abstractly considered, that they might act differently. When, however, you have reflected upon this answer, and stripped it of its technical form, you will find that it amounts to nothing. It just says, that, notwithstanding the decree of God, man retains his liberty of action; and, consequently, puts us off with an assertion under the pretext of giving us an explanation. Believing that all things are immutably fixed in the divine counsels, we wish to know how the predetermination is consistent with liberty. To what purpose is it to tell us, that God has decreed that some things shall take place necessarily, and other things freely? What information does this answer give us? what doubt does it solve? Still the question remains, How can those actions be free, which were so fixed that they could not be avoided?

It is a more intelligible method to explain the subject by the doctrine, which makes liberty consist in the power of acting according to the prevailing inclination, or the motive which appears strongest to the mind. Those actions are free which are the effect of volition. In whatever manner the state of mind which gave rise to the volition has been produced, the liberty of the agent is neither greater nor less. It is his will alone which is to be considered, and not the means by which it has been determined. If God fore-ordained certain actions, and placed men in such circumstances that the actions would certainly take place agreeably to the laws of the mind, men are nevertheless moral agents, because they act voluntarily, and are responsible for the actions which consent has made their own. Liberty does not consist in the power of acting or not acting, but in acting from choice. The choice is determined by something in the mind itself, or by something external influencing the mind; but, whatever is the cause, the choice makes the action free, and the agent accountable. If this definition of liberty be admitted, you will perceive that it is possible to reconcile the freedom of the will with absolute decrees; but we have not got rid of every difficulty. By this theory, human actions appear to be as necessary as the motions of matter according to the laws of gravitation and attraction; and man seems to be a machine, conscious of his movements, and consenting to them, but impelled by something different from himself.

Upon such a subject, no man should be ashamed to acknowledge his ignorance. We are not required to reconcile the divine decrees and human liberty. It is enough to know that God has decreed all things which come to pass, and that men are answerable for their actions. Of both these truths we are assured by the Scriptures; and the latter is confirmed by the testimony of conscience. We feel that, although not independent upon God, we are free; so that we excuse ourselves when we have done our duty, and accuse ourselves when we have neglected it. Sentiments of approbation and disapprobation in reference to our own conduct or that of other men, would have no existence in our minds if we believed that men are necessary agents. But the tie which connects the divine decrees and human liberty is invisible. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it."* If every thing in religion were level to the comprehension of reason, there would be no room for faith. It is better to believe humbly, than to reason presumptuously. And presumptuous all those reasonings may be called, which lead to the denial of the immutability of the divine counsels, or of the freedom of the human will; which make man a machine, and God the author of sin.

It is worthy of attention, that the great objection against unconditional decrees, that they are inconsistent with the liberty of action, is not removed by denying them, if it be granted at the same time, that our actions are fore-known. The foreknowledge of God is not conjecture, or probable calculation, but distinct and infallible prevision of future events. Whatever is the foundation of his foreknowledge, what he does foreknow will undoubtedly take place. Here, then, the actions of men are as unalterably fixed from eternity, as if they had been the subject of an immutable decree. I would ask, therefore, how they are more free in one case than in the other? Absolute decrees are objected to because they render human actions necessary; that is, having been fore-ordained, they must take place, and cannot be avoided. But there is the same strong necessity, in consequence of foreknowledge. Actions which were certainly foreknown, will certainly take place; and it is as impossible to avoid them, as it is to pluck the sun from the firmament. Thus, in endeavouring to escape one difficulty, we run into another equally formidable. *Incidit in Scyllam, qui vult vitare Charybdim.*†

The rejection of absolute decrees is intended to pave the way for the establishment of that kind of liberty which consists in the self-determining power of the will, or is the consequence of the admission of such liberty. Arminians maintain, that after all motives have been presented to his mind, a man retains the power of complying with them or resisting them, that the will remains in a state of indifference, and inclines to the one side or the other by its own sovereign choice. Absolute decrees overturn this notion of liberty from the foundation. It is evident that actions are not contingent; that is, it is not true that they may or may not be, if they are predetermined. But it is equally evident that they are not contingent, if they are foreknown. If God foresees that an event will take place, its future existence is necessary; that is, it is impossible that it should not take place. It was certain from all eternity that a good man would perform a virtuous action yesterday, as it is now certain that he did perform it. How, then, could that action be subject to the arbitrary decision of his will? How could it still be equally possible that he might or might not perform it? On the supposition of simple fore-knowledge, even without any positive decree, the Arminian notion of liberty falls to the ground. It were well if the abettors of this system would consider, that the consequences, with which they charge the doctrine of absolute decrees, arise equally from their own doctrine of fore-knowledge. The objection, that they necessitate human actions, would cease to alarm them, and their minds would be disposed to assent to the doctrine of our Church, that "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass."‡

* Psalm cxxxix. 6.
† He that wishes to avoid Charybdis, falls upon Scylla.
‡ West. Conf. chap. iii. § 1.

LECTURE XXXV.

ON PREDESTINATION.

Predestination defined—Systems of the Supralapsarians, Sublapsarians, and Arminians—Decree of Election—Its Eternity, Sovereignty, and Immutability—Its connexion with the Mediation of Christ—This Decree not the Rule of human conduct.

The preceding Lecture was devoted to the consideration of the decrees of God. I endeavoured to prove that there are Divine decrees, or that God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, and to illustrate their properties or distinguishing characters. I shall now proceed to speak more particularly of those decrees which relate to his intelligent creatures.

They are commonly comprehended under the general title of Predestination. It is applicable, indeed, according to the import of the term, to all the purposes of God which determine beforehand what is to come to pass; but it is usually limited to those purposes of which the spiritual and eternal state of man is the object.

It is evident from reason, that the Divine decrees relate also to angels, and it is inferred from that passage of Scripture in which the elect angels are mentioned.* As they were created by the power of God, so it was not without an act of his will that some of them stood, and others were permitted to fall. We cannot suppose the angelical order to have been left out of his plan, any more than the human race, or created will to have acted with more independence and sovereignty in the one case than in the other. But, as the Scriptures have said little on this subject, we should have no assistance in pursuing the inquiry but the feeble light of our own minds, and should be encumbered by greater difficulties than those which attend the decrees of God in relation to man. We shall therefore pass to the consideration of the latter, on which our information is more ample, and which it is manifest are not, like the former, a subject of mere speculation; for, although the decrees are not a rule of conduct to us, they are calculated to awaken sentiments of piety, and are represented as furnishing ample grounds of admiration, gratitude, consolation and hope to believers.

The term, predestination, includes the decrees of election and reprobation. Some, indeed, confine it to election; but there seems to be no sufficient reason for not extending it to the one as well as to the other, as in both the final condition of man is pre-appointed, or predestinated. Upon a subject so abstruse, it is not wonderful that there should be a diversity of opinion, especially when, instead of implicitly acquiescing in the dictates of revelation, men begin to reason and to judge of the proceedings of an infinite Being by their own notions of wisdom and fitness. I shall lay before you a short account of the different systems which have been espoused by divines of different denominations.

The first is that of the Supralapsarians, who maintain, that, as what is last in accomplishment is first in the intention of a wise man, the object of God in his eternal decrees was the manifestation of his infinite perfections, and particularly of his mercy and justice, in the happiness of some of his creatures and the misery of others. To accomplish this design, he decreed to create man after his own image, but to place him in such circumstances that his fall would necessarily follow: to send his Son to die upon the cross for the salvation of those whom he had chosen, and to give them effectual grace to convert and sanctify them, while the rest should be delivered up to blindness and impenitence. According to this system, as the name of those by whom it is adopted imports, the Divine decrees had no respect to the fall of man, except as it was the means of executing them. Men were elected or rejected without any consideration of the fall, and were viewed by God, not as sinners, but simply as creatures. God thought only of his own glory, and all the events which take place in time, the creation of man, his apostasy, and his recovery, are so many steps in the process. While we must concede to this system the praise of consistency, by which I mean the regular disposition and close connexion of its parts, our minds revolt from the idea of such absolute sovereignty as appears in the destination of intelligent creatures to everlasting misery, not only before they had actually committed sin, but prior to the consideration of it. We startle at the thought of the destruction of immortal creatures being appointed by God, solely for the purpose of glorifying his name, and at the formal and direct introduction of sin as the fittest expedient for exhibiting him in his various characters of excellence to the admiration of the universe. We begin to grow giddy at the elevation to which we have ventured to soar. We experience a confusion of ideas, and know not well what to think. We are at a loss to determine whether justice in God be the same in kind with justice in man, and whether we should regard him as the affectionate and bountiful Parent of the human race, or as a despot, whose arbitrary will is his law, and who sports with their interests and feelings solely for his pleasure.

The Sublapsarians agree with the Supralapsarians in holding, that God has chosen some to life, and doomed others to death; that he decreed to send his Son to die for the former, and to give them his effectual grace; and that this purpose was eternal; but they differ from them with respect to the character in which the objects of his purpose were considered, affirming that they were regarded, not simply as creatures, but as sinners. God, having foreseen from all eternity that man, whom he intended to create after his own image, would fall from a state of innocence, elected some of the human race to everlasting life, and left the rest to perish in their sins. The advantage which this system proposes is, that, the objects of the decree being considered as guilty, the same objection cannot be urged against the rejection or preterition of some of them, as in the former case, where all were considered as innocent. It is alleged, indeed, by Supralapsarians, that it admits a conditional decree, predestination being founded upon the foresight of what man would do, and consequently, that it is encumbered with all the difficulties which accompany conditional decrees; or that the decree is conditional only in appearance, God having previously decreed to permit man to fall. Future events cannot be foreseen, unless they be certain; they cannot be certain, unless God have determined to bring them to pass. If, then, the fall of man was certainly foreseen, it was infallibly decreed. It was fixed from eternity; it was a link in the chain of events, which was to terminate in the manifestation of the Divine glory. The Sublapsarian scheme removes no difficulty, but merely speaks in terms less offensive. It is virtually the same thing to say, that God decreed that Adam should fall, and then decreed to save some of his posterity, and leave others to perish; as to say that God first decreed to save some, and condemn others, and then, in order to accomplish this design, decreed the fall of Adam, and the whole human race in him. As both parties appear to hold the same ideas upon the subject, it does not seem to be material in what order they are arranged. Whatever truth there may be in such observations, the Sublapsarian scheme has a milder aspect; and although we cannot solve every difficulty, and reply to every objection, it seems wiser to adopt that mode of speaking on a subject so little understood, which is most consonant to our notions of the moral character of God.

* 1 Tim. v. 21.

The third system is that of the Arminians, or Remonstrants as they are also called, who deny absolute and unconditional decrees, and maintain, that whatever God has decreed respecting man is founded upon the foresight of their conduct. Having foreseen without any decree, that Adam would involve himself and his posterity in sin and its consequences, he purposed to send his Son to die for them all, and to give them sufficient grace to improve the means of salvation; and knowing beforehand, who would believe and persevere to the end, and who would not, he chose the former to eternal life, and left the latter in a state of condemnation. There has been a diversity of opinion among the holders of this general system; and some of them, who have gone so far, in support of their idea of the freedom of the will, as to maintain that human actions, being contingent, cannot be certainly foreseen, have been led to affirm, that the decrees of God respecting men are not eternal, but are made in time; that men are elected to eternal life after they have believed, but that, if they fall into a state of unbelief and impenitence, the sentence or decree is reversed.

The doctrine of our church is so expressed, that without putting any unnatural construction upon the words, it might be supposed to be agreeable to the Supralapsarian scheme. I refer to the third chapter of the Confession of Faith, and to the explanation of the decrees in the Larger Catechism. The Shorter Catechism may be supposed to be modelled after the Sublapsarian scheme, as the fall is mentioned before election, and election seems to be represented as an act of God, following in order the consideration of the fall. We may therefore conclude, that it was not the intention of the Church to give any decision upon the controversy, and that every man is at liberty to arrange the decrees in that order which appears to him most agreeable to the language of Scripture, and to the views which it gives us of the perfections of God. And it is well, that there has been no attempt to dictate to us upon a subject so abstruse, and in a case where a difference of opinion may be held, not only with a good conscience, but without the slightest injury to the interests of piety and holiness. Supralapsarians and Sublapsarians are agreed in ascribing to God the glory of Supreme dominion and sovereign grace, and in acknowledging, that his unmerited love is the source of all our blessedness in this world, and of all that we hope to enjoy in the world to come; "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things."*

It will be the business of the subsequent part of this lecture, to shew that God did actually choose, before the foundation of the world, some of the human race to eternal life, and that he left the rest to perish in their sins.

Let us begin with Election, which may be defined to be the choice which God, in the exercise of sovereign grace, made of certain individuals of mankind to enjoy salvation by Jesus Christ. This definition may be illustrated and confirmed by the following particulars.

First, God has chosen some to salvation in preference to others. Nothing would be more absurd, than to oppose this proposition, in the first instance, as inconsistent with the impartiality of the Supreme Being, or with his justice and goodness, while we have a safer mode of ascertaining whether it should be received or rejected, by examining the Scriptures. Is it contained in them, or may it be deduced from them by plain and necessary consequences? Now, I may appeal to every candid person, whether it is not the obvious import of those passages which speak of certain persons under the character of the elect, as chosen in Christ,† as chosen to salvation,‡ as predestinated to the adoption of sons,‖ and to be conformed to the image of God's Son,§ as elect according to the foreknowledge of God,* as vessels of mercy whom he hath before prepared unto glory.† Whatever else such phrases may imply, they manifestly refer to some act of God in relation to the persons designated, by which they are distinguished from others. When a choice is made, we must conceive that, of a number of persons, some are taken, and others are left. There can be no such thing as the election of a whole class, viewed as separated from every other class. Election is a relative term, and necessarily involves the idea of rejection. The election of which we speak cannot be considered merely as a general purpose to furnish mankind with the means of salvation. The term can bear no such meaning; and to use it in this sense, would be an example of abuse or perversion, to which it would not be easy to find a parallel. It is an express purpose to confer salvation upon certain individuals. It is not an election of characters, but of persons; that is, it is not a general design to give eternal life to those who shall believe and repent, but a specification of those who shall actually enjoy it. Hence their names are said to be written in heaven,‡ and to be written in the book of life.‖ They are a class of persons, whom God foreknew; whom, in consequence of his foreknowledge, he calls, and distinguishes in his dispensation of grace, as he had previously distinguished them in his purpose. "Even so at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."§ God, who is independent, and owes nothing to his creatures, may give or withhold his favours according to his pleasure. If men have forfeited all claim to his regard, if they have fallen under his wrath, and might have been doomed to hopeless misery, there is not the shadow of injustice in the exercise of his mercy only to a portion of the criminals. When one man is exempted from punishment, no injury is done to his companions in condemnation, who are left to the vengeance of the law, because they richly deserved to suffer it and do not become less guilty, because he is pardoned. The cry against election, as if it made God a respecter of persons, is a senseless one, and proceeds either from stupidity or malignity. He only is a respecter of persons, who confers favours upon some, and withholds them from others equally deserving; not he, who, where none has a claim upon him, disposes of his gifts, in the free exercise of the power over them which naturally belongs to him. May he not do what he will with his own?

Secondly, The election of certain persons to eternal life was made from eternity. Some indeed, as we have already mentioned, speak of an election which takes place in time; and only such an election is consistent with the other parts of their system. God, they say, purposed from eternity to send his gospel to men, and to save such of them as should believe it; but, as the determinations of the human will are sovereign, the persons who will obey the gospel must be unknown, until they are ascertained by the event, and their actual faith must precede their proper election. You perceive that this is the opinion of those who are led by their extravagant notions of liberty, to deny the Divine prescience of what they call contingent actions. But, to take no notice of the strange and impious tenet, so inconsistent with the absolute perfection of the Divine understanding, I observe, that an election in time is at direct variance with the doctrine of Scripture. "We are bound," says Paul to the Thessalonians, "to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."¶ Some understand by "the beginning," the beginning of

* Rom. xi. 36. † Rom. xvi. 13. ‡ 2 Thess. ii. 13.
‖ Eph. i. 6. § Rom. viii. 29.

* 1 Pet. i. 2. † Rom. ix. 23. ‡ Heb. xii. 23.
‖ Phil. iv. 3. Rev. xiii. 8. § Rom. xi. 5, 7. ¶ 2 Thess. ii. 3.

the gospel, and suppose the Apostle to mean, that they were elected at the time when the gospel was first preached to them, and they believed it. But the absurdity of this opinion is manifest. Who can suppose that all the Thessalonians to whom the Epistle is directed, believed from the moment that the glad tidings were first proclaimed to them? Did it not happen in Thessalonica, as in other places, that some believed at first, and some afterwards, and that those who were to be saved, were gradually added to the Church? It is worthy of attention, that the words in the following verse—"Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"—evidently import, that their call to the enjoyment of salvation was subsequent to their election; for the Apostle distinguishes between the two facts, asserting that they were chosen to salvation from the beginning, and then called to it by the gospel. It seems, therefore, more consonant to the whole passage, to assign to the term beginning, the sense, which it bears in other passages, where it signifies eternity. "In the beginning was the Word."* "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was."† But the following passages are more explicit, and their evidence can be set aside, only by such criticism as perplexes what is simple, and darkens what is clear. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."‡ "He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which were given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."‖ Infinite knowledge is a divine perfection. The eye of God sees at one glance the past, the present, and the future. No event occurs which he did not foresee; no circumstance takes place, which did not enter into his plan. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."§ All things relative to every individual of the human race were settled, long before man was created; the number of the inhabitants of heaven was fixed, "while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest parts of the dust of the world."

In the third place, In the election of certain persons to eternal life, God did not proceed upon the ground of their foreseen qualifications. The choice was an act of his sovereignty. I would not be understood to insinuate, that the procedure of the Almighty was arbitrary, or that there was no reason why he preferred some to others, because he who acts without reason, acts without wisdom; but I affirm, that the preference was not owing to any difference in the moral characters of its objects. Many, who admit the doctrine of election, which is so clearly taught in the Scriptures, maintain that the decree was conditional. God, they say, having purposed to send his gospel to this and the other nation, foresaw in what manner each individual would conduct himself in reference to it. He foresaw, that while some, under the influence of pride of understanding and worldly affections, would treat it with neglect and contempt, others would embrace it with a sincere and upright heart, and live in obedience to its precepts; and these he appointed to salvation on the ground of their foreseen faith and good works. The decree of God, although prior to time, is posterior in order to the actions of men, and is dependent upon the determination of their will. But, to this opinion, so derogatory to the supreme dominion and absolute authority of God, the doctrine of Scripture is directly opposed. Election is ascribed to grace, to the exclusion of works; and these two causes are represented as incompatible and mutually destructive. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work."* How is it possible to reconcile with these words, the opinion that the foresight of men's good works was the cause of their election? Besides, it is worthy of particular attention, that faith and holiness, which the advocates of conditional decrees make the causes of election, are expressly said in Scripture to be effects of it. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth;"† not for your faith and holiness, but through them as the means, by which the Divine purpose is executed. A passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians must be cited again. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."‡ Here the order is exactly the reverse of that which is laid down in the system of our opponents. Men are not first holy, or foreseen as to be holy, and then chosen; but they are first chosen, and then holy, their holiness being not the cause, but the end of the decree. In the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul produces the case of Jacob and Esau as an illustration of the subject, and traces the predestination of individuals, to happiness or misery, to the sovereignty of God without any consideration of their works. "When Rebecca had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth,) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."‖ As the lot of the two sons of Isaac was settled prior to their personal conduct, so the Apostle signifies, that the appointment of particular persons to salvation depends solely upon the good pleasure of God. It is, indeed, impossible to conceive, that God could foresee faith and holiness in men previous to their election, because, human nature being totally depraved, they can have no existence but as effects of divine grace; and if there be any thing clear in the Scriptures, it is this, that the communication of grace is the consequence of the love of God before the foundation of the world. This eternal love is the source, from which proceed those heavenly influences that purify the human soul. But how, it may be asked, does it happen, that in the face of all this evidence, so many should maintain conditional election? The true answer is, that the sovereign exercise of mercy renders us absolute debtors to our Maker; it leaves not a vestige of merit, it humbles us in the dust. How contrary this procedure is to our natural inclinations, you need not be informed. Man, fallen and degraded as he is, would still be great; and nothing comes with more reluctance from his lips than the right answer to this question, Who maketh thee to differ from another? He wishes to find some ground for saying, I have made myself to differ, and fondly embraces any theory which makes him the arbiter of his destiny, and suspends his final doom upon his own determination.

In the fourth place, The purpose of God respecting his elect, is immutable. It cannot be reversed. Some, indeed, have maintained, that the decrees of God are subject to change, like the purposes of men; and that a person who is one of the elect to-day, may become one of the reprobate to morrow. This notion is in unison with their ideas of the freedom of the will, which, possessing a power to act in opposition to the influence of motives, may disappoint the calculations which had been made of its decisions, and render ineffectual the means employed to regulate its choice. Hence there may be sudden transitions from faith to unbelief, from the love of God to the love of the world; in consequence

* John i. 1. † Prov. viii. 23. ‡ Eph. i. 4.
‖ 2 Tim. i. 9. § Acts xv. 18.

* Rom. xi. 5, 6. † 2 Thess. ii. 13.
‡ Eph. i. 4. ‖ Rom. ix. 10—13.

of which the name of the unworthy persons shall be blotted out of the book of life. This is the doctrine of Arminius and his followers, in whose writings we meet with such expressions as these: "It is false to say that election is confirmed from everlasting;" "men may make their election void;" "they do sometimes, of elect, become reprobate, and of reprobate, elect;" and "as they change themselves from believers to unbelievers, so the Divine determination concerning them changes." As it is evident that this doctrine is calculated to impair the consolations of the people of God, and to fill them with perplexity and fear; so it is in direct opposition to his word, which declares, that "the counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."* But besides this general assurance of the immutability of his counsel, it is affirmed in particular, that "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his."† There is no reason to doubt that "the foundation of the Lord" here signifies his decree, which is the ground of his knowledge of those who are his; and when we consider, that the words are introduced in connexion with the mention of false teachers who had erred concerning the truth, and overthrown the faith of some, we are led to infer the stability of the Divine purpose respecting the elect, and their subsequent security against the danger of total and final apostasy. We find our Saviour saying to his Father concerning his disciples, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.—Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition;"‡ but that he was not properly an exception, is manifest from the words immediately subjoined, "that the scripture might be fulfilled," which import that his perdition was foreknown and predetermined. In a word, the immutability of the decree is evident from the close connexion established between election and final salvation, by a process, all the steps of which are inseparably conjoined. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified."‖ You perceive that a chain stretches from eternity to eternity, not one link of which can be broken. The purpose of God, according to election, shall stand. The rage of the world, the malice of devils, and the will of man, froward and perverse as it is, shall not be able to overthrow it. "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."§

This, then, is the sum of what has been said on the subject of election; that God did make choice of certain individuals to enjoy salvation in preference to others; that he chose them before the foundation of the world; that in doing so, he acted according to his sovereign will, and was not influenced by the foresight of their good qualifications; and that this decree is immutable, it being impossible that any of the elect should perish.

There is one particular which remains to be considered, namely, what is the connexion between the decree of election and the mediation of Christ. Had God any respect to it, in choosing some men to salvation? If he was not influenced by the foresight of their faith, was he influenced by the view of their future relation to the Saviour? In other words, were they predestinated to life for his sake? And is this the meaning of the Scripture when it says, that they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world?—To this question I return an answer in the negative. Whatever is the sense of the phrase now quoted, this cannot be its meaning. We must explain one passage of Scripture in consistency with another; and, as we find that the mission of our Saviour was the effect of the love of God, or, to use his own words, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,"* we conclude that his mediation was not the cause, but the consequence of election. The end is first in intention, and then the means are appointed. The end in this decree was the salvation of the elect, and the means were the incarnation, and death, and intercession of our Lord. In the Divine mind, there is no succession of thoughts; but according to our analogical mode of conceiving its operations, the appointment of certain persons to salvation, was prior to the appointment of the means by which they should be saved. The phrase, chosen in Christ, signifies, I apprehend, that God had a respect to the mediation of his Son, not as the reason of their election, but as the expedient by which his purpose would be executed. When he chose them, he gave them to Christ, as he himself speaks. He constituted him their Head; he set him up from everlasting as their Representative and Surety, by whom all would be performed which his justice required as the condition of their final happiness. Hence, grace is said to have "been given them in Christ Jesus, before the world began,"† and eternal life is called the promise "which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began."‡ In both passages there is an obvious reference to Christ, to whom eternal life and all the blessings of grace were promised, as the federal head of the elect. But they were first chosen and then given to him, agreeably to his own declaration. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me."‖

Election, being the purpose which God purposed in himself, an intrinsic act of the Divine mind, remains unknown till it be manifested in its execution. No man can read his own name, or that of another, in the Book of life. It is a sealed book, which no mortal can open. We are assured that there is such a decree, by the express testimony of Scripture; but of the persons included in it, nothing is known or can be conjectured, till evidence be exhibited in their personal character and conduct. An Apostle points out the only means by which this important point can be ascertained, when he exhorts christians to "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure."§ To make sure, signifies in this place to ascertain, to render a thing certain to the mind. Now, the order of procedure is, first to make our calling certain, or to ascertain that we have been converted to God, and thus our election will be sure, or manifest to ourselves. It is the same kind of reasoning which we employ, in tracing out the cause by the effect. The operation of divine grace in the regeneration of the soul, is a proof that the man in whom this change is wrought, was an object of the divine favour from eternity. The love of God is the source of all the blessings conferred upon believers. In particular, that operation of his power, by which they are brought into the fellowship of the Gospel, is declared to be the consequence of a prior purpose to save them. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." The evidences of regeneration, therefore, are evidences of election; but there is no other process by which the latter may be proved. The Scriptures give us no information on the subject: it cannot be known by special revelation, for God makes no disclosure of such secrets; nor is it to be inferred from impressions or feelings of the mind, for these are the effects of fancy, and no wise man will attend to them. Till the decree bring forth, no created being can tell what are its contents. For "who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?"

As no man can know his election till he believe, it is

* Ps. xxxiii. 11. † 2 Tim. ii. 19. ‡ John xvii. 6, 12.
‖ Rom. viii. 30. § Isa. xlvi. 9, 10.

* John iii. 16. † 2 Tim. i. 9. ‡ Titus i. 2.
‖ John xvii. 6. § 2 Peter i. 10.

plain that the decree ought to have no effect upon his conduct in reference to the Gospel. What is unknown can have no moral influence upon the mind, any more than what does not exist. The rule of our duty is the word of God. The only subject into which we should inquire, is the declaration of his will respecting us; and no inference, which we may draw from the doctrine under consideration, will justify us in neglecting our duty. God has not told us whom he has chosen to salvation; but he has told us, that all to whom the Gospel is preached should believe it, and that every man who does believe shall be saved. We have a law plain and express, and a promise encouraging obedience to it, which, having been made by Him who is incapable of deceiving us, will certainly be performed. This should satisfy us, and put an end to our disputes. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but things that are revealed to us and to our children for ever."*

The doctrine of election is attended with difficulties; but, if it is delivered in the Scriptures, as I trust has been proved, we are bound to receive it. All that we ought to expect with regard to subjects so profound, is sufficient evidence of their truth; it is impossible that, to our limited faculties, they should be made so clear as to supersede all objections. The proper office of faith is to assent to the doctrines of religion upon the Divine testimony alone; and its strength is never so fully displayed, as when it receives no aid from sense or reason, and, although both should ask with an air of scornful triumph, How can these things be? rests with unshaken confidence upon the word of Him who cannot lie. Let us never forget that it is not reason, but revelation, which is our guide in religion, and that, when the latter speaks, it is the province of the former to listen and acquiesce.

LECTURE XXXVI.

ON PREDESTINATION.

Decree of Reprobation—Proof that there is such a Decree—The Ground of it; and wherein it consists—Practical Utility of the Doctrine of Predestination—Objections to it.

HAVING considered, in the preceding Lecture, the decree of election, I now proceed to speak of that of reprobation. Our Church gives the following account of it:—"The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."† To reprobate is to disapprove, or to reject; and the term is used to express that act of God by which, when all mankind were before the eye of his omniscience, he rejected some, while he chose others. Some are disposed to prefer the word preterition, not only because it is a softer term, but because they conceive that there was no positive act of God in reference to those who were left in their sins, but that he merely passed them by. His procedure towards them, they consider as a simple negation of the favour which he extended to others. But, although there is no reason for employing terms unnecessarily strong, upon a subject which in itself is very awful, and we would not imitate those who have chosen to express themselves in the harshest and most offensive manner, as if they had felt some strange delight in painting it with the darkest colours; yet I do not see how we can suppose nothing more than a sort of inactive preterition, as there was undoubtedly an act of the will of God with respect to the reprobate as well as the elect. When, out of many objects which are presented to him, a person makes a selection, he as positively rejects some as he chooses others. He does not pass by any without taking notice of them; but, having them all at once, or in succession, under his eye, he takes and leaves, for reasons which are satisfactory to himself. Not to choose, is a negative phrase, but it does not imply the absence of a determination of the mind. It is not to words, but to things, that we ought to attend; and any man, who reflects upon the operation of his own mind in a similar case, will perceive that the will is exercised in passing by one object, as much as in choosing another. There seems to be no reason, therefore, for denying, that what is called reprobation was a positive decree as well as election. Some distinguish reprobation into negative and positive; calling it negative, as it consists in withholding from the objects of it the favour which is extended to the elect, and positive, as it consists in a purpose to permit them to be hardened in sin, and to punish them for their final unbelief and impenitence.

Without dwelling upon these niceties, let us proceed to shew, that there is such a purpose of God as is commonly called reprobation. It appears from what has been already said, that it is necessarily implied in the idea of election, so that, having proved the one, we have virtually proved the other. Election and rejection are correlative terms, and men impose upon themselves, and imagine that they conceive what it is impossible to conceive, when they admit election and deny reprobation. When of several objects some are chosen, the rest are rejected. It is to no purpose to say that nothing has been done to them, but that they are left in the state in which they were found. In one sense this is true and in another it is not true; because, as they might have been chosen but were not, there has been an act of the mind refusing to choose them. The person to whom they were presented has said, 'These I will take, and those I will not take.' There are many passages of Scripture in which this doctrine is taught: we read of some whose names are "not written," and who consequently are opposed to those whose names are written, "in the book of life;"* who are "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,"† who were "before of old ordained to condemnation,"‡ who "stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed;"‖ of persons whom God is said to hate, while others he loves.§ Let any man carefully and dispassionately read the ninth and the eleventh chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, and he will entertain no more doubt that some are ordained to death, than that others are ordained to life. He will see a distinction stated between the children of the flesh and the children of the promise, and traced up to its source in the sovereignty of God, who will "have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion; so that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."¶ He will find, that some have not obtained righteousness or salvation, but that others have obtained it: and that the former are called "the election," and the latter "the rest,"** οἱ λοιποὶ, the remainder, or those who were left. However awful and revolting to our feelings the doctrine may be, however liable to objections it may seem, and whatever startling inferences our perverse reason may deduce from

* Deut. xxix. 29. † West. Conf. chap. iii. § 7.

* Rev. xiii. 8. † Rom. ix. 22. ‡ Jude, 4. ‖ 1 Peter ii. 8.
§ Mal. i. 2, 3. ¶ Rom. ix. 15—18. ** Rom. xi. 7.

it, it is impossible, with any appearance of fairness, to deny that it is delivered in the Scriptures.

If we inquire into the reason why God passed over some in his eternal decree, while he extended mercy to others, we must content ourselves with the words of our Lord, which were spoken in reference to the execution of his purpose:—"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* It may be supposed, indeed, that we need not resolve the decree of reprobation into the sovereignty of God, as a sufficient reason for it may be found in the moral character of its objects, who, being considered as fallen and guilty creatures, may be presumed to have been rejected on this account. But although this may seem at first sight to have been the cause of their reprobation, yet upon closer attention we shall see reason to change our opinion. It is obvious that, if they had not been considered as fallen, they would not have been rejected, unless we adopt the Supralapsarian hypothesis, which affirms that they were viewed only as creatures, and that, by that uncontrolled power which may make one vessel to dishonour, and another to honour, their appointment to perdition, for the glory of Divine justice, was prior to the purpose to permit them to fall. There is something in this system repugnant to our ideas of the character of God, whom it represents rather as a despot, than the Father of the universe. But, although their fall is pre-supposed to their reprobation, it will appear that the former was not the reason of the latter, if we recollect that those, who were chosen to salvation, were exactly in the same situation. Both classes appeared in the eyes of God to be guilty, polluted, and worthy of death. Their sinfulness, therefore, could not be the reason of rejection in the one case, since it did not cause rejection in the other. If it was the reason why some were passed by, it would have been a reason why all should be passed by. As, then, it did not hinder the election of some, it could not be the cause which hindered the election of others. You ought not to think that there is too much refinement and subtlety in this reasoning. If you pay due attention to the subject, you will perceive that, as the moral state of all was the same, it could not be the cause of the difference in their destination. If there was sin in the reprobate, there was sin also in the elect; and we must therefore resolve their opposite allotment into the will of God, who gives and withholds his favour according to his pleasure:—"He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."†

In this decree of God, the two following things are to be distinctly considered. The first is the purpose to withhold from the objects of it that grace which he would extend to the elect. He would send his Son into the world to seek and to save that which was lost, but he did not intend him to be the Saviour of the reprobate; for, to say that he did, would be to say that he intended what is not accomplished, and consequently that he is disappointed. He would make his gospel be preached to them, or at least to many of them; but he would not accompany it with those supernatural influences which would illuminate their minds, and change their hearts, and enable them to yield the obedience of faith. He would lay restraints upon them by his providence, so that the wickedness of their hearts would not find an opportunity of exerting itself in all its activity and virulence; but he would leave them in all other cases, to follow their own inclinations. Is there unrighteousness with God in this procedure? God forbid. How can there be unrighteousness in denying a favour to which there is no claim? There is certainly no law by which he is bound to deliver his apostate creatures from guilt and its consequences. Having transgressed, they are amenable to his justice; and if justice take its course, who has a right to find fault? God found men in sin; and in leaving them there, he did no wrong, and was chargeable with no cruelty, if sin is a voluntary evil, and deserves the pains and penalties which are denounced against it in his word.

The second thing to be considered is, the purpose to subject the objects of this decree to everlasting punishment. They are "appointed unto wrath:"* "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire."† Of this part of the decree, we must admit sin to be the proper cause. It is not the cause, as we have seen, of their preterition; but it is the cause of their destination to perdition. As this is an act of God in the character of a judge fixing beforehand the punishment of the guilty, the sentence must be preceded by the consideration of their guilt. There can be no will in God to punish any but sinners; nor could the intention to punish be just, without a respect to disobedience. God does not arbitrarily, or in the exercise of sovereignty, consign any of his creatures to damnation. In a case of this nature, sovereignty has no place; it is justice alone which decides; and if there were no fault, justice would inflict no suffering. It is for their sins against the law, if they lived under it alone, or for their sins also against the gospel, that they are doomed to destruction.

I am disposed to doubt, notwithstanding the opinion of Divines to the contrary, whether this purpose is any part of the decree of reprobation, which properly consists in passing by its objects, or rejecting them. The dooming of them to perdition seems to belong to a different decree, especially as it is founded on a different cause. They were appointed to wrath for their sins; but it was not for their sins, as we have shewn, but in the exercise of sovereignty, that they were rejected.

This is all that I have to say on this part of the subject. I have endeavoured briefly to explain my views of it, and to prove that they are agreeable to Scripture; but we must close this inquiry with the words of the Apostle: "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"‡

The doctrine of the Divine decrees relative to the final destination of men, is not a barren speculation. There are practical purposes to which it may be applied; and in particular, it is calculated to inspire sentiments of reverence and gratitude towards God.

First, It exhibits him in the august character of the Supreme Lord of the universe, who doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and whose arm none can stay, saying to him, What dost thou? We do not ascribe to him an absolute power to consign his creatures to misery, without any consideration of their guilt, because we do not wish to exalt his authority at the expense of his goodness and justice, and because such a Being could never be the object of our confidence and love. At the same time, we acknowledge that he does exercise a sovereign power over his creatures, considered merely as his creatures, for he has made some angels, some men, and some irrational animals. But it is to his uncontrolled sway over his creatures, as fallen, that the present subject directs our attention. They were all before his eye in a state of pollution, and under a sentence of death. He might do with them what he would; and he has done according to his pleasure. He has not left all under their doom, nor extended mercy to all; but has distinguished between objects, in which there was no ground of distinction, and said to some, Ye shall live, and to others, Ye shall die. His will is the law, and from his sentence there is no appeal. It is by a view of his supreme dominion that the Apostle silences the murmurs and complaints of impious men: "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me

* Matt. xi. 26. † Rom. ix. 18.

* 1 Thess. v. 9. 1 Pet. ii. 8. Jude 4.
† Rev. xx. 15. ‡ Rom. xi. 33.

thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?"*

Secondly, It affords an illustration of the exceeding riches of his grace. It may be thought, indeed, that it rather represents him as severe and terrible, in consigning so many of the human race to perdition; but, although it is acknowledged that it does so, as we shall afterwards see, let us remember that there are two aspects under which the subject may be viewed, and that one of them is of the most pleasing and consoling nature. In the destination of a portion of the human race to the enjoyment of everlasting felicity, God appears in the character of the God of love. It is love of the purest and most disinterested kind, as it flowed out spontaneously towards its objects, while there were, not only no qualities in them to attract it, but every thing was repulsive. It strikes us the more, because its date is so ancient; because it anticipated the existence of its objects, and provided for their relief as soon as their necessity was foreseen; thus proving that love is essential to the Deity, and that nothing is more agreeable to him than the exercise of benevolence. As the whole series of events was open to his all-seeing eye, the riches of his grace appear still the more wonderful, because the communication of them to the objects of his favour could not take place without a sacrifice, (if I may be permitted the use of this expression on such an occasion), without a sacrifice on the part of God, which nothing but infinite love could have made. The incarnation, the humiliation, the sufferings, the death of the Son of God, were the consequences of his purpose to bestow eternal life upon the unworthy objects of his choice. And when we add, that election is but the first step in the dispensation of mercy to mankind, that it is the first link of a chain which runs into eternity, and has no end, may we not say, How great is the goodness which thou hast wrought for them that fear thee? "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."†

Lastly, It gives a solemn and impressive view of his justice and severity. We have seen that sin was not properly the cause of reprobation, because, upon this ground, the whole human race would have been rejected. But sin rendered it just in God to pass by such as he pleased, and to doom them to everlasting misery. While we speak of his sovereignty in choosing some, and leaving others, let us not forget to think of his justice, because, when it is admitted as a principle of his procedure in the final allotment of the ungodly, some of the objections which are advanced against predestination will fall to the ground. The rejection of so many of the human race is a proof that God is holy and just; that sin is contrary to his nature, and the object of his abhorrence; so that, notwithstanding his essential goodness, which disposes him to promote the happiness of his creatures, he will not suffer it to pass with impunity. His justice appears the more awful and inflexible, because it is manifested at the same time with his love. Behold the goodness and severity of God; his goodness to the chosen, his severity to the rejected. This is such an association as we find in the proclamation of his name, to which the mention of this terrible attribute, after the celebration of his mercy in language studiously varied, gives a solemn close. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." O! how great is he who sits upon the eternal throne as the arbiter of life and death, and pronounces the dreadful sentence upon many (how many we cannot tell) to display his power, and proclaim to the universe, that, full as his heart is of benevolence to his sentient creatures, the honour of his own character and government is dearer to him than their happiness! "Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy."

If the doctrine of predestination has a practical tendency, the question, whether it should be publicly taught, admits of an easy solution. It seems impossible, indeed, to assign a good reason for attempting to suppress any truth which is contained in the Scriptures. If it were useless, and still more, if it were dangerous, God would not have revealed it. But, as the subject is so difficult, and lies so far beyond our range of thought, it is plain that it is not to be attempted by every sciolist, who, with a few common notions of Theology in his head, may deem himself competent to engage in the most profound discussions; and farther, that it calls for modesty and diffidence in the best informed, and for the utmost care, to avoid human speculations, and to adhere, as much as possible, to the language of Scripture. When we allow reason to be our guide in these abstruse matters, we are not sure of the way, and may seem to ourselves to be treading on the high road, when we are wandering in a devious path. It may also be safely laid down as a rule, that it should not be frequently introduced, because, although it has a relation to the faith and practice of christians, there are other subjects of which the influence is more immediate and extensive, and which ought therefore to occupy a more prominent place in a course of instruction. I should not entertain a favourable opinion of the wisdom of a minister who often declaimed upon these high mysteries, while he might spend his time more profitably to himself and his hearers, in speaking of the simple doctrines of the gospel, by which men live, and in which is the life of their souls; and I am disposed to suspect, that we should find him and his followers more distinguished by pretensions to superior knowledge and disputatious zeal, than by humble faith and spirituality of mind. Attention should likewise be paid to times and circumstances in teaching this doctrine. None but a thoughtless zealot would bring it forward to meet the view of an inquirer into the truth of our religion, and thus take the direct method to disgust him at the outset: a wise man would begin with the elements or first principles, and then go on to the higher branches of the science, giving milk to babes, and reserving strong meat for men. It would be imprudent and cruel to obtrude the subject upon a person who was depressed with a sense of sin, and the fear of never enjoying the favour of God: unless we wished to increase his perplexity, and to drive him to despair, we would have recourse to different topics, to the freeness of Divine grace, the infinite value of the Saviour's blood, and the unlimited offer of salvation. It would betray great unskilfulness in the work of righteousness, to intermix this subject with an exposition of the common doctrines of the gospel; when we are speaking of the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, to be sure uniformly to add, that he died only for the elect; when we are inviting sinners to come to him, not to let pass the opportunity of reminding them, that unless they are elected, they never will believe; when we call upon men to repent, to take care not to omit, that if they be among the reprobate, they will not repent, as they are given up to hardness of heart. This sort of preaching, I should consider as injudicious in the highest degree, and as calculated to defeat the design of the preacher, if his design were the salvation of souls. We have no example of it in the

* Rom. ix. 20—23. † Rom. viii. 30.

Scriptures, nor do I think it consistent with common sense. I conclude with quoting the words of our Confession of Faith: "The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in his word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation, to all that sincerely obey the gospel."*

I shall conclude by taking notice of some of the objections which are advanced against the doctrine of predestination.

First, It has been often said, that it represents God as a respecter of persons. In order to ascertain whether there is any force in this objection, it is necessary to inquire what respect of persons means. I suspect that this is a point which our objectors have not been at pains to settle, and that they ignorantly suppose the preference of one to another to be the same with respect of persons, while there are not two things in the world more distinct. "Of a truth," said Peter to Cornelius, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."† From these words you perceive, that respect of persons is the preferring of one man to another, although both were equally entitled to regard, on account of some accidental circumstance, as, for example, his belonging to a particular nation. It is to give him the advantage above another, not for the superiority of his worth or the justice of his claim, but for some consideration altogether foreign to the man and his cause. Thus a judge is chargeable with respect of persons, when he is induced to pronounce an improper sentence, either by pity for a poor man, or by adulation of the rich. To this very case the law of Moses refers: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour."‡ It has been laid down by Divines as a maxim, that respect of persons has no place in acts of bounty, in relation to which a man may do as he pleases, but has place in acts of juctice, with regard to which there is an obligation upon him who distributes, to render to every one his due. It is absurd, therefore, to call God a respecter of persons in predestination, because, in his eternal purpose, he acted not as a judge but as a sovereign, as one who owed nothing to his creatures, and was guided by his own views of fitness and expedience, without any external consideration. As the whole human race was fallen and guilty, there was nothing in any of them which could influence him to prefer them to others; he was moved solely by his own wisdom, and cannot therefore be called a respecter of persons.

Secondly, It is objected, that the doctrine of predestination supposes men to be laid under the necessity of sinning, and consequently makes God the author of their sin. I acknowledge that this horrible inference seems to be naturally deduced from the Supralapsarian scheme, which represents the introduction of sin as the appointed mean of executing the purpose of the Almighty, respecting the final doom of his creatures. But it does not follow from our scheme, which presupposes sin as the groundwork of predestination, and makes the act of God towards the reprobate to be nothing more than his purpose to leave them in their sin, and to withhold his grace, which he was under no obligation to communicate. God does not will the sins of man, or effect them by any operation of his power; he merely arranges his plan with a view to them, and overrules them for his glory. I confess that the statement may be objected to as not complete; that there are still difficulties which press upon us; that perplexing questions may be proposed, and that the answers which have been returned to them by great Divines are not so satisfactory in every instance, as those imagine who do not think for themselves, and take too much upon trust. The subject is above our comprehension. There are two propositions, of the truth of which we are fully assured,—that God has pre-ordained all things which come to pass, and that he is not the author of sin. There can be no doubt about either of them, in the mind of the man who believes the Scriptures. He may not be able to reconcile them, but this ought not to weaken his conviction of their truth. Instead of suspecting the one or the other, it will be wise in him and in us to suspect our own reasonings from them. We are sure that they harmonize; but, if our reasonings terminate in making them appear contradictory, we have ground to call their accuracy in question. By our reasonings, I mean our application of human ideas to the Divine decrees, and the inferences which we deduce from them.

Thirdly, It is objected against the doctrine of predestination, that it supersedes the use of means. If a man has been elected, he shall be saved, although he should give himself no concern, and even should live in sin: if he has not been elected, all his efforts to obtain eternal life will prove unavailing. But, of all objections, this is the silliest, although it is brought forward with great confidence, and by many is deemed very formidable. It is not an objection at all against the Scriptural doctrine of predestination, but against a spurious kind, hatched in the brains of ignorance, or concocted by malignity to bring odium upon the truth. The predestination to which this objection would be applicable, is an absolute pre-appointment of an end, without any regard to the means. But such predestination cannot without impiety be attributed to God, because it would be disgraceful to one of his intelligent creatures. Whoever reasons against this kind of predestination, is at perfect liberty to bring all the arguments which he can muster up to bear upon it, till he has fairly driven it off the stage. He must allow us, however, to tell him, that he has given himself a great deal of unnecessary labour; that he has been contending with a chimera, and has gained an empty triumph, as our doctrine remains untouched. The predestination which we maintain, is a purpose which embraces means and ends, fixes the means as surely as the ends, and so connects them, that without the former, the latter cannot take place. If God has elected some persons to eternal life, he has chosen them to it through faith and holiness as the means of salvation; if he has appointed other persons to wrath, his sentence is founded on their impenitence and unbelief. This is the doctrine of Scripture; and if you will still assert that it renders all means unnecessary, you may with equal reason maintain, that a man who has been assured that, by the use of a certain medicine, his life will be prolonged, may justly take occasion from this assurance to neglect the medicine, and, at the same time, expect to live. Paul was assured, by a vision, of the lives of all that were in the ship with him, but still he said to the centurion, "Except the sailors abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." And why did he say so, but because God had determined that the company should be saved by the skill and activity of the sailors? The man who says that the decrees of God supersede the use of means, does not know what he is saying. The means are an essential part of the decree, and are as necessary as the end. I mean, that it is not more necessary, that those who were chosen to life should be saved, than it is, that they should repent and believe. You would say, that the decree of God had failed, if any of the elect should perish; and I would say with equal truth, that it had failed, if any of them were

* West. Conf. c. iii. § 8. † Acts x. 34, 35. ‡ Lev. xix. 15.

saved in a state of carelessness and indolence. The uselessness of means, in consequence of the doctrine of absolute decrees, is a topic of vulgar declamation, which every man who wishes to maintain the credit of his understanding, should leave to sciolists and fools.

Lastly, It is objected, that the doctrine of predestination is inconsistent with the invitation of the gospel; for how could God offer salvation to men, if he had excluded them from it by an immutable decree? and how could he earnestly entreat them to believe, although he had determined to withhold his effectual grace? There is a greater difficulty here than orthodox Divines sometimes seem willing to acknowledge, and the mode in which they meet it, is not always satisfactory. A distinction between the secret and revealed will of God must be admitted, and in many instances is perfectly intelligible; but it is not easy to reconcile them, when, in revelation, he declares, that he is not willing that any should perish, but by his secret counsel, has left many to perish. He who sees no difficulty here, has not, as he probably imagines, more understanding than other men, but less. It may be remarked, however, that this objection does not press upon the system of absolute decrees alone, but meets every man, who simply admits the Divine prescience of future events; for how, it may be asked, can God in sincerity invite, beseech, and expostulate with men, evidently with a design to effect a change of their sentiments, although he knows infallibly before-hand, that they will never change? I know what may be said in answer to the objection; but I confess my inability to give complete satisfaction to myself or to you. Let us suspect our own views of the subject, rather than suspect the sincerity of God. Of the latter we are certain; it is essential to his moral character and is the foundation of our faith in his testimony, and our dependence upon his promises. We can never be certain that we understand the subject of predestination, so well as we understand that God is sincere. The latter truth, therefore, let us hold fast, whatever may become of our speculations respecting the former. Here we may err, because the subject is mysterious; but on the other point, we cannot be deceived. The gospel is preached to every creature. All are commanded to believe, and encouraged by the promise of salvation. God would "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."* If doubts respecting these comfortable declarations of Scripture should be suggested to us from any quarter, let us repel them as hostile to our own peace, and subversive of religion, and say with the Apostle, "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar."†

In this and the two preceding lectures, I have considered the Divine decrees, first generally, and then more particularly, as they relate to men, and their eternal state. The doctrine which I have endeavoured to establish is, that God, before the beginning of the world, pre-ordained whatever comes to pass; or that, in the works of creation, providence, and redemption, he acts according to a plan previously settled in his own mind. To this general view of the subject there can be no objections, but as soon as we proceed to the application of it to human affairs, difficulties present themselves, which we are unable to solve. Two things are certain, that there are Divine decrees, which will be infallibly executed, and that man is responsible for his actions; but how to reconcile them is a question which has perplexed thoughtful men in every age, and to which a satisfactory answer has not yet been discovered. In this case, our duty is, not to reject either of those points, but to call in the assistance of faith, when reason fails, and to believe, that by a mysterious link, God, as the poet expresses it,

"—binding nature fast in fate,
Left free the human will."*

It can serve no great purpose to muster up objections against the infallibility of the Divine decrees, or the responsibility of man; to listen to them when proposed by others; to revolve them in our minds; to perplex ourselves with attempts to answer them, and to allow ourselves to be disquieted and to doubt because our endeavours are not successful. Although we should prove to our satisfaction, as many have done to theirs, that the decrees of God are not absolute, or that man is not free, all that we have gained is, to confirm our minds in the belief of a falsehood; for both doctrines must be true, as they are expressly declared in the Scriptures. To their authority let us bow; and by their decision let us regulate our thoughts and our conduct. If we still oppose our reasonings to their dictates, we must take our course; but let us beware lest we dispute ourselves into infidelity or atheism, and seek a refuge from our doubts in the rejection of revelation, because it inculcates truths which to us appear contradictory, or in the cheerless conclusion, that we live in a fatherless world, where chance bears sway, that man is the phantom of an hour, the sport of accident and passion, and that, as he knows not whence he came, so he cannot tell whither he is going. In opposition to this comfortless and impious conclusion, let us hold fast the creed which is consonant to reason as well as to revelation, that the Supreme Being manages the affairs of the universe which he created; that all creatures are dependent upon him, and all events are subject to his control: that while good men obey him from choice, the wrath and wayward passions of the bad are subservient to his design; that, while his almighty power bends them to his purpose, he is a moral Governor and Judge, whose righteousness will be displayed in punishing transgressors, even for those actions which were the means of executing his own decrees.

LECTURE XXXVII.

ON CREATION.

Idea of Creation—Evidences that the Universe was Created—Illustration and defence of the Mosaic Account—God's Design in creating the Universe.

God works all things according to the counsel of his will, or, in other words, his external operations are conformable to the plan which was arranged by his wisdom from eternity. We are therefore naturally led, after having considered his decrees, to speak of their execution in his works. Our attention shall be directed, in the first place, to Creation, in which the execution of his purposes commenced.

In entering upon this subject, it is necessary to ascertain what is the precise idea of creation, or in what sense the term is used, when it is employed to denote the agency of God in the production of the universe. In this inquiry, we can receive no assistance from the consideration of the terms כרא and κτιζω, by which it is expressed in the Scriptures. Compound words are significant in themselves, because they are made up of terms to which a meaning has been previously affixed; but simple words are arbitrary sounds, which convey no idea to the hearer till he has been informed of what notion they are appointed to be the signs. Now, we find that the words under consideration have several acceptations in the Scriptures: and in particular, that the former signifies to make something out of nothing, to make something out of materials already existing or to

* 1 Tim. ii. 4. † Rom. iii. 4.

* Pope.

give them a new form and arrangement, to revive and re-invigorate, and, lastly, to effect a change in the moral qualities of the soul, as when a new heart is said to be created within us. It is evident that the term is used in the first of these senses in the first chapter of Genesis, when God is said to have "created" the heavens and the earth. The subsequent verses of that chapter give an account of the order in which matter already existing was disposed, while, in our world the sea was separated from the land, and the earth was clothed with herbs, and filled with inhabitants; and in the higher regions, the luminaries had their stations and revolutions assigned to them. The manifest design is, to inform us by what steps God brought the mass of rude matter into that beautiful assemblage of parts which excites the admiration of every beholder. The first verse, therefore, must be understood to refer to the original production of matter by his almighty power. "In the beginning," or at the commencement of time, he made out of nothing the matter of which the heavens and the earth were composed, and upon which their present form was afterwards superinduced. This, I think, is the natural way of explaining the words; and, according to this view of them, the Bible opens with an ascription of the act of creation to God, in the highest, or rather, the only proper sense of the term.

There is another passage which will assist us in ascertaining the sense in which God is said to have created the world. "Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear,"* μη εκ φαινομενων, τα βλεπομενα γεγονεναι. Now, remark, that the Apostle would have suggested a different idea had he used the phrase, εκ μη φαινομενων;† for he would have intimated, that visible things were made of things invisible, which might have been supposed to signify the dark original chaos of the Heathens. But the expression, μη εκ φαινομενων,‡ imports something very different, a denial that the universe was formed out of pre-existing matter. In other words, the worlds, according to the Apostle, were made out of nothing. Even the chaos of the ancients was invisible only because no sun, as Ovid says, gave light to the world, and the evening moon did not then repair her new horns; || it would have been seen, if there had been a medium through which it might be perceived. "The things that appear" are matter, which light has rendered visible, or matter which may be seen; and of this matter, Paul assures us the worlds were not framed.

Different arguments have been employed to prove that the universe had a beginning, and, consequently, that it was created by the power of God. To suppose the universe to be eternal, is to suppose it to be self-existent. But, besides that there is nothing in matter, which is inert, passive, divisible, and subject to perpetual change, to suggest the idea of its self-existence, it should be remembered, that whatever is self-existent, is necessarily existent. But as this necessity is the same every where, it follows, upon the supposition, that matter must have existed every where, or must have filled every portion of space, and have been infinitely extended. But this is absurd, and contrary to fact. There is another consequence which is equally false, that, if matter exists necessarily, it must exist either in a state of motion or in a state of rest, as necessity will determine every part of it to be in the same state. It would be impossible that, as is actually the case, one part of it should be in motion and another at rest. The necessity of its existence would extend to all its modifications; and, indeed, if we closely consider the subject, we shall find that it could have no modifications, but that, under the influence of necessity acting uniformly every where, it must have presented every where one uniform mass. How contrary this is to the actual state in which matter appears, we all know by observation.

Another argument against the eternity of the universe, is founded in the nature of time, which is a succession of moments. We can conceive time to commence at any given period, and to run on *ad infinitum*, or never to come to an end; but we cannot conceive it to be actually infinite. An infinite duration can never be made up of finite parts; because as each of those parts has an end, the sum which they compose must also have an end. As it is impossible that an infinite succession of moments can be past, it is impossible, that the universe can have existed from eternity. Further, if matter has existed from eternity, it must have existed, as we have seen, in the same form which it at present sustains, for this is the consequence of its necessary existence. The earth on which we dwell, and the heavens above us, are eternal; and the same motions have been incessantly going on in the immense regions of space. The earth has been revolving on its own axis, and, as well as the other planets, has been performing its circuit around the sun. Its revolutions upon its axis have been infinite; and so have been its revolutions in its orbit; and so have been the revolutions of Saturn. Mark the consequence. We have here three infinites, which are made up of unequal parts; an infinite made up of the revolutions of Saturn, the time of which is twenty-nine times less than the infinite made up of the annual revolutions of the earth, and many thousand times less than the infinite made up of the diurnal revolutions of the latter. Thus we are landed in a palpable absurdity, from which we can only escape by renouncing the untenable hypothesis of the eternity of the universe, and admitting the Scriptural doctrine of its creation.

Another argument against the eternity of the world is founded on the recent date of authentic history. If, indeed, the accounts of some nations were to be credited, we should believe, that our earth has existed for many millions of years; but these are the dreams of poets, or of men of wild and undisciplined imaginations, and have been satisfactorily proved to be false. No credible history reaches farther back than the period which Moses has assigned for the creation; and profane history has nothing to relate but fables and rumours till the age of Herodotus, who flourished about five hundred years before the christian era. The silence of history with respect to any event prior to the time when we suppose the world to have been created, is unaccountable, if it had existed for eternity, or even for millions of years. How does it happen that not a hint has come down to us of innumerable former generations? Surely, the human race must have possessed letters and science long before the date which we assign to them. How have all their monuments perished? How is it that to us thousands and thousands of generations are as if they had never been? And how is it that civilization and learning can be traced back only to a period which is but as yesterday, if the earth and its inhabitants had no beginning? The want of all records of a higher date, the recent origin of nations, and the late invention of arts, all concur to shew, that only a few thousand years have elapsed, since our earth and its inhabitants came into existence. This argument was employed long ago by Lucretius, a follower of Epicurus, who, although an atheist, maintained, according to the doctrine of his master, that the present system had a beginning, in respect at least of arrangement and form. If the heavens and the earth are eternal, why have the actions of illustrious men so often sunk into oblivion? Why does no record remain to perpetuate their fame? Why does history begin with some facts of comparatively modern date?

* Heb. xi. 3. † Of things which do not appear.
‡ Not of things which appear.
|| Ovid. Metamorph. lib. i. v. 10.

Cur supra bellum Thebanum et funera Trojæ,
Non alias alii quoque res cecinere poetæ ?*

Why sang not other poets other deeds
Beyond the Theban war, and ruined Troy?

Notwithstanding these arguments, none of the ancient philosophers, not even Lucretius or his master, had any proper idea of the creation of the universe. They all believed the eternity of matter. Ocellus Lucanus, in his treatise Περι του παντος,† maintains the eternity of the universe by this argument, that what will have no end had no beginning; drawing a confident conclusion from a mere assumption, and taking for granted two things, which any person was at liberty to deny, and for which he could not produce the shadow of proof, that the universe will last for ever, and that it is impossible for a being to last for ever which had a beginning. It is impossible, he says, for any thing to be produced out of nothing, εκ των μη οντων, or to be resolved into nothing.‡ He does not speak of a Being distinct from matter, by whom it was reduced to order. The doctrine of Plato was, that there were two principles of the universe, both self-existent and independent, matter and God; and that God wishing all things good, and as far as his power extends, nothing evil, having received matter in a discordant state, brought it from disorder into order, judging this to be preferable. Even Socrates treated as fools and madmen those who attempted to solve the question, whether all things were generated and perished, or were eternal and indestructible. Epicurus admitted, that the heavens and the earth had a beginning in respect of their present form, and, as we may infer from his disciple Lucretius, seems to have considered their origin as not very remote; but he maintained, in common with other philosophers, the eternity of the matter of which they were composed. According to his fanciful theory, it existed in the form of atoms, which moving in the immensity of space, met at last, and formed that stupendous and beautiful system, which no man can contemplate without admiration and delight. In order to accomplish this design, Epicurus was under the necessity of making many gratuitous assumptions. He supposed that his atoms were in motion, although no reason could be assigned why they were once in motion, and are now at rest; that their motion up or down, was not perpendicular but somewhat inclined, so that there might be a possibility of their meeting; and that, small as they were, they were not of a uniform shape, but that while some were smooth, others were hooked, and so could lay hold of their neighbours, and coalesce into a palpable body. Furnished with these postulates, he was ready to show how the universe was framed by mechanical causes, without the intervention of an almighty and intelligent Agent. His theory has been repelled by heathen and christian writers; but the ravings of wild speculation never deserved a serious answer. You will observe, that as Archimedes could not move the earth, as he promised, because he could not find a place on which to rest his lever, so without atoms Epicurus could have done nothing. Like the other philosophers, he conceived it impossible that the heavens and the earth should have been made, without pre-existing materials.

It is, then, with propriety and justice, that an Apostle declares, that "through faith" we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God. It is revelation which has informed us, that all things had a beginning, and reason assents to the doctrine as true, and derives from its own reflexion new arguments to support it.

The act of creation, which we ascribe to God, is the production of something out of nothing. The power by which creation was effected, we may not be able to conceive, because it is different from the power which we exert, or which we have seen exerted by others. All that we can do is to operate upon materials already existing; and even here, the sphere of our activity is very limited. But there is no reason why we should deny or doubt, that there is such power in God; for it is one of the first dictates of reason, that we ought not to measure him by our standard. As there is nothing to limit the perfections of the First Cause, we believe his power to be infinite, by which we mean, power which can perform every thing that does not imply a contradiction, or which can perform every thing possible. It is plain, I think, that the production of something out of nothing implies no contradiction; and to say, therefore, that God could not create, in the sense already explained, would be to say, that his power was not the greatest conceivable, that he was finite in one of his attributes, and consequently finite in them all.

In speaking of the creation of the universe, the sacred historian adopts the common and obvious division of it into two parts, the earth and the heavens. The earth, indeed, is but a very small part of the universe, like a drop to the ocean; but, as it is the allotted habitation of the human race, it was worthy of distinct mention, and a particular description. At first, it seems to have existed in a fluid form, without order and beauty, or to have been covered with water. "The earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."* As the word rendered Spirit, signifies also wind, some have supposed, that in this place it may be so translated; and that Moses meant to inform us that a mighty wind, called in the Hebrew idiom, a wind of God, agitated the unwieldy mass. But this view of the passage is destitute of any foundation. Wind is air in motion; but at this period, it would seem the atmosphere did not exist. It appears to have been the work of the second day, when God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters; and let it divide the waters from the waters."† The word רקיע, which is translated by the Seventy στερεωμα, and in the Vulgate *firmamentum*, from which our "firmament" is derived, signifies an expanse; a term which very aptly denotes the atmosphere, capable as it is of being so much expanded by heat, and extending to a great distance from the surface of the earth. Besides, the office assigned to the firmament, of dividing the waters from the waters, belongs to no part of nature which we know, but the atmosphere, in which the water exhaled from the earth and the sea is suspended, till, condensed by cold, it falls down in dew and rain. Whatever, then, may have been the operation to which Moses refers, it was the Spirit of God who moved upon the face of the waters.

It is unnecessary to enter upon a particular detail of the successive steps by which the earth was brought into its present form. On the first day, light was created; on the second, the atmosphere was formed; on the third, the water was collected in the seas and lakes, and the dry land appeared, which was immediately clothed with grass, and herbs, and trees; on the fourth, the sun, and moon, and stars were made, or became visible; on the fifth, the waters and the air were replenished with inhabitants; on the sixth, terrestrial animals were produced, and man, last of all, appeared to have dominion over this lower world.

I shall take notice of only one particular in this narrative, which, to those who are acquainted with the actual system of the universe, may seem to render it incredible. The sun is the great fountain of light to the inhabitants of the earth; but according to Moses, light existed prior to the sun. The objection supposes us to know what we certainly do not know, that light is necessarily dependent upon the sun. But, although it

* Lucret. de Rerum Nat. Lib. v. 327.
† Concerning the universe. ‡ Chap. i.

* Gen. i. 2. † Gen. i. 6.

now comes to us principally from him, yet he is not the only source from which it flows. There is light produced by the ignition of combustible substances, light struck out from hard bodies by percussion or friction, phosphoric light, and electric light, of which we sometimes see a brilliant display in the Aurora Borealis. As there is light, even at present, without the sun, what difficulty or improbability is there in conceiving light to have been without him at the beginning?

We cannot tell whether it now proceeds from his body or from his atmosphere; and on this subject, philosophers are divided in opinion. We know not, indeed, what light is, although we are acquainted with its laws and properties; but whatever is its nature and its connexion with the sun, I would understand the making of that luminary on the fourth day, not to be the creation of the matter of which it consists, but the collection of light in him as its grand repository. My reason for doing so is, that God is said at first to have created the heaven as well as the earth, and that the six days were employed merely in arranging them in their present form. This view will obviate another objection which may occur to a philosophical mind,—that the earth could not have occupied its proper place in the system, if it had been made before the sun, by which it is retained in its orbit. But, if the law of gravitation had then been established, and the planetary movements had begun, the matter can be satisfactorily explained, by supposing that the sun was created at the same time with the earth, but that it was not till the fourth day that he became a luminous body. The influence which he exerts upon the motion of the earth, depends not upon his light, but upon his solid mass.

All the other parts of creation are comprehended under the name of the heavens, which, in the plural number, signifies in the language of the Jews, the region where clouds and meteors are formed, or the air; the region of the sun, moon, and stars; and lastly, the heaven of heavens, the habitation of the blest. We have spoken of the first, which properly belongs to the earth, in our remarks upon the firmament or expanse. The sun, we have already seen, is the great source of light to our system; and the moon, although probably created as soon as the earth, is said to have been made on the fourth day, because then only it became visible by reflecting the rays of the sun. Under the denomination of the stars are included not only those luminaries, which are properly called so, but the planets also which belong to our system. Our Bibles give us no farther account of them, than that they were appointed for signs and for seasons; and any additional information respecting them, is founded on observation and reasoning. The discoveries of modern science make no part of Theology; but they are worthy of attention, because they exalt our ideas of the might and beneficence of our Creator. As the planets are removed from us by many millions of miles, they could not be visible unless their magnitude was great. How much greater is the magnitude of the fixed stars, the distance of which from the earth is such, that it seems but a step to the utmost planet which revolves around the sun! It is natural to ask, for what purpose they were placed in the heavens? It was not surely to give light to the earth; for all their light is of little account, and more would be furnished by a single additional satellite of a size far less than the moon. It is not to mark the revolution of the year, and the progress of the seasons; for this is ascertained by the motion of the sun, and the changes which take place upon the surface of the earth. Shall we then suppose that they were created in vain? Shall we suppose that a Being of infinite wisdom, who made the little ball which we inhabit for great purposes, and made that star which we call the sun, to give it light, has lavished his power in the production of thousands and millions of suns for no assignable end? Why are such vast bodies so situated as to appear to us only as points? Was their surpassing splendour, which attracts, indeed, the eye of a spectator upon earth, but darts upon it only a faint and ineffectual ray, bestowed to be wasted on the barren fields of ether? We cannot for a moment admit a conclusion which seems to charge the Lord of nature with folly, and is at variance with the proofs of intelligence and design which are so amply supplied by his other works. The opinion, that around those suns planets revolve, the inhabitants of which rejoice in their light, and are cheered by their influences, is something more than a flight of fancy. It rests upon strong grounds of belief; and while it vindicates the wisdom of God in replenishing with so many bodies the wide regions of space which would be otherwise useless, it fills us with admiration of his inexhaustible goodness which has diffused life and happiness far beyond the reach of the eye, and the more extended range of imagination. It may be mentioned as a corroboration of this theory, that in the heavenly bodies which lie nearer us, we observe certain phenomena, which indicate that they are destined for some other purpose than to give light to the earth. The surface of the moon, like that of our globe, is diversified by hills and vallies, which we cannot conceive to be of any use, if the moon is a solitude. In three of the planets, we observe a provision similar to what is made for us, to alleviate the darkness of the night, in the satellites which move around them, in different times, and at different distances. Why are they accompanied with moons, if there are no inhabitants to whom their light would be grateful in the absence of the sun? To us they can be of no use, because they are invisible to the unassisted eye. There is another wonderful fact, from which, however, we cannot reason so certainly, the ring of Saturn, because we are unacquainted with its use; but we may be confident that it was not placed there in vain. If it was intended for ornament, there must be some spectators nearer than the inhabitants of this globe, to whom it was unknown till modern times, and of whom scarcely one in a hundred thousand has ever seen it, and then very imperfectly through a telescope: if it was intended for accommodation, it was the accommodation not of the planet itself, which no more needed this appendage than Jupiter or Mars, but of the beings who reside upon its surface. Upon the whole, it is highly probable, that as the fixed stars are luminous bodies of an immense size, or in other words, suns, they are surrounded, like our sun, with planets, which are not deserts, but the seats of life, and activity, and enjoyment. Thus, the universe opens upon us in all its magnificence and extent; and lifting up our thoughts to Him, at whose fiat it arose out of nothing, we feel ourselves constrained to express our admiration and praise in the words of the Psalmist, "How manifold, O Lord, are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches."

The heavens signify, in the last place, the region of peace, and purity, and joy, where God manifests himself in all his glory to his perfect creatures. It must be a place, because human bodies at present dwell in it, and it is the destined abode of the just after the resurrection; and it must therefore, have been created. We can say little more about it; but we may bestow a few words in passing, upon its original inhabitants, the angels, although no mention is made of them in the Mosaic account of the creation. We know that they are creatures, who, as an Apostle informs us, were called into existence by our Saviour, who created things visible and invisible, probably at that time when the heavens were made, with all their host. We are told, that when God laid the foundation of the earth, "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy."* They are pure spirits, although they have occasionally assum-

* Job xxxviii. 7.

ed a visible form. They were created in a state of holiness and felicity, from which some of them fell through pride, and have been cast down into darkness, where they are "reserved in chains unto the judgment of the great day."* They excel in wisdom and strength, are possessed of knowledge far superior to that of man, and of power which his mightiest efforts could not resist. They are employed by God in the affairs of his government. They execute judgments upon the wicked, and minister to them who are the heirs of salvation. Although we do not see them, yet they are well known to us by means of the Scriptures, which make frequent mention of them, and give a detail of their offices and operations. But I shall not enlarge upon this subject at present: it is sufficient to have referred to angels as a part, and a distinguished part of the creation.

Our next inquiry relates to the time when the world was created. According to the Hebrew chronology, as ascertained by Archbishop Usher, the creation took place four thousand and four years before the birth of Christ; but according to the Septuagint, nearly six thousand years. There can be little doubt which of these computations should be preferred. The original, when all the copies agree, is surely higher authority than a translation. With me, the authority of the version would go but a short way; and I cannot conceive for what reason some learned men are disposed to pay such deference to it in this and in other matters, as it is full of mistakes and blunders, and is probably the most inaccurate of all translations. But, here we are encountered by the pretended discoveries of modern science; and the observations which have been made upon the structure of the earth, are supposed to contradict the Mosaic account, by proving that it must have been created at a more distant period, if it was created at all; and that it must have undergone many revolutions prior to what we call the beginning. Some reject the account of Moses entirely; and others conceive that it tells us, not of the original creation of the earth, but of the changes which took place upon it after some terrible convulsion. Thus, according to the words of a celebrated poet,—

> "Some drill and bore
> The solid earth, and from the strata there
> Extract a register, by which we learn
> That He who made it, and revealed its date
> To Moses, was mistaken in its age."†

This is manifestly a subject beyond the reach of our faculties; and geology, as sometimes conducted, is a monument of human presumption, which would be truly ridiculous were it not offensive by its impiety. "Where wast thou," said the Almighty to Job, "when I laid the foundation of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding."‡ Our philosophers do not pretend to have been present when the earth was founded; but they profess to shew us how it was made, and that a much longer period was necessary to form its rocks and its strata, than the Scriptures assign. Thus puny mortals with a spark of intellect, and a moment for observation, during which they take a hasty glance of a few superficial appearances, deem themselves authorised to give the lie to Him who made and fashioned them, and every thing which they see. It happens, however, that forsaking the only safe guide in such high speculations, and following the faint and deceitful light of reason, they wander in the mazes of error and uncertainty. Their theories are different; what one builds up, another destroys; amidst the conflict of opinions, all equally false, the narrative of Moses stands unmoved, like the rock amidst the waves, resting on the solid basis of all the proofs by which the genuineness and inspiration of his writings are demonstrated. "From the endless discordance in the opinions of philosophers on this point," says a learned Professor; "from the manifest inadequacy of the data we are at present in possession of; and from the physical impossibilities which must forever be a bar to any thing more than a superficial knowledge of the earth's structure,—it is preposterous to suppose, that that high decree of moral evidence on which the credibility of Scripture rests, can with any justice be weakened by our interpretation of phenomena, the connexion of which among themselves even, we certainly are at present, and probably ever shall be, incapable of explaining."

The vanity of the reasoning of modern geologists, may be made manifest, and the basis of their theories overturned, in a very easy way. They talk of primitive formations, and ascribe the origin of rocks to precipitation and crystallization. Looking at a piece of granite from the mountains, they point out the characters of aqueous or igneous fusion, and say that it was formed by the agency of water or fire, carried on through a long process, which it required ages to complete. It is not denied that the substance might have been produced by the laws of chemistry, but is it certain that it was so produced? Those laws are at present operating throughout our world; but, if it was not eternal, they must have had a commencement. Why may we not suppose that their Author anticipated their operation, and immediately created substances of such a texture or composition, as would have resulted from them in the natural order? Why may we not suppose, that he made rocks at first such as they would have been made by precipitation and crystallization? No geologist can deny that the thing was possible, unless he be an Atheist, and then we have nothing to do with him or his theory; and if it was possible, his argument from primitive formations against the comparatively modern date of the earth, vanishes into smoke. We say that, although certain substances might have been produced by secondary causes, God could, and did produce them at once. That there was a first man, will be denied by none but an Atheist. Now, if we were in possession of one of his bones, we should find that in all respects it resembled the bones of his posterity; and reasoning according to our geologists, we should conclude that at first its fibres were soft, that they gradually became cartilage, and last of all acquired the hardness of their perfect state. But we should reason falsely, because that bone was made solid and firm in a moment. If we saw one of the first trees, we should perceive no difference between it and a tree of more recent date. On being cut across, it would exhibit the same folds or circles, indicating the growth of successive years, and increasing in hardness as they were nearer to the centre. The theory of the geologist would justify us in maintaining that it had originally sprung from a seed, and required many years to bring it to maturity; while the fact would be, that it was the work of an instant. In both cases, we have all the apparent effects of the processes of ossification and lignification, while it is certain that the processes never took place. We have therefore demonstration of the authority of a rule which has been laid down, and effectually destroys all the geological systems which represent second causes as immediately concerned in the formation of our earth. It is this, that sensible phenomena cannot alone determine the mode of formation. We have no occasion to convert each of Moses' days into thousands of years, and to conceive the chaos as an immense laboratory, from which, after the operations of ages, the earth came forth as we now see it. There was a power adequate to create it at once which formed the primeval rocks without the aid of fire or water, as it made perfect bones, and perfect trees, independently of the second causes, by which they are at present produced.

God created the heavens and the earth about four thousand years before the Christian era. The materials were produced out of nothing in an instant; but it is related, that six days were employed in arranging

* Jude 6. † Cowper's Task, B. III. ‡ Job xxxviii. 4.

them in their present form. Some are of opinion that these were not natural days, but periods of an indefinite length; because they think that the world must have been created at an earlier date than Moses has assigned to it, and ages were necessary to give rise to those appearances which are observed in its structure. But, besides that this opinion is objectionable on the ground, that its puts a meaning upon the word day, although it is distinctly defined by the evening and the morning, which it bears no where else in simple narrative, it remains to be proved that there is any necessity for such interpretation. Although the Mosaic account gives no philosophical explanation of material phenomena, yet it informs us that the earth was at first in a state of fluidity, and that it was covered with water again more or less, for a year at the deluge, when it underwent a terrible convulsion, perhaps by the operation of internal fire, of the existence of which we have proofs in so many volcanoes. The crust of the earth seems to have been then entirely shattered, when the fountains of the great deep where broken up. It is impossible for us to conceive the changes which must have been produced in its structure by this awful catastrophe, and the irresistible action of such an immense body of water as submerged the whole globe. If we cannot answer particularly all the objections of geologists, neither can they satisfactorily shew that the appearances, upon which they found their theories, were not caused by that event, and by the state in which the earth existed before it was brought into its present form. We may, therefore, understand the words of Moses literally, when he says, that in six days God created the heavens and the earth. As he could have perfected them at once, we cannot conceive any reason why he proceeded by degrees, but that he might exhibit his power and his wisdom more distinctly to us, who should be afterwards informed of the process; and that he might confirm, by his own example, the command to work on six days, and rest on the seventh.

There is a question which is more curious than useful, and which, like some other questions which have been proposed, does not admit of a satisfactory answer—respecting the season of the year when the world was created. On this point, men, as we might have expected, have been divided in opinion; but many have imagined that it was created in autumn, because then the civil year of the Jews commenced, as well as their Sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee; and chiefly because autumn is the season when the fruits are ripe, and consequently provision was ready for the use of man, and other animals. I do not think that there is any force in either of these reasons; and with regard to the latter, it is obvious, that it leaves the matter as unsettled as before, because autumn is a local term, which varies in its application to different countries, according to their geographical situation. Even upon our side of the Equator, harvest is beginning in some countries when the seed-time is scarcely over in others; and hence, unless we know the place of paradise, to say that the world was created in autumn, gives no information at all with respect to the time when it was made.

Whether God ceased to create when he had made the heavens and the earth, is another question which we are not competent to answer. We cannot, without presumption, affirm or deny that he has since exerted his creating energy in other portions of space. It is certain that although he is said to have "rested" on the seventh day, he was not fatigued nor were his resources exhausted: "The Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary." Nothing more is implied in that expression, than that he produced no new species of creatures, and effected no new arrangement in the visible universe, or at least, on our earth. In strict language, the act of creation was confined to the first day, when the matter, of which the heavens and the earth are composed, was produced. The work of the following days consisted in separating it into its component parts, assigning to each of them its place and office, and combining them into a harmonious whole. The subsequent production of vegetables and animals is not properly a creation, but a new arrangement of matter already existing; which, however, required the same Almighty power that at first brought matter out of nothing. It must be granted, at the same time, that God continues to exert his creating power in producing the living principle in animals, and, in particular, the soul of men; which, being a spiritual substance distinct from the body, derives its existence immediately from the will of the Almighty.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their host. The magnificent fabric was erected to be a monument of the power, and wisdom, and goodness of its Maker. His glory shines in every part of it; but it would have shined in vain, if there had been no creature to contemplate it with an eye of intelligence, and celebrate the praises of the Divine Architect. Man, therefore, was introduced into the habitation which had been prepared for him,—a being of a higher order than those which were already made, endowed with an understanding to know his Creator, and with moral powers to be employed in his service.

If it is inquired, what was God's design in the creation of the universe? we must answer, that in this, as well as in all his other works, his ultimate end was his glory. God hath made all things for himself. Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things. In the things which he has made, his power, and wisdom, and goodness are displayed. When we say that he made all things for himself, as it is evident that we do not mean that they were necessary to him, or that he derives any benefit from them, so it is not to be understood that his purpose was to make a naked manifestation of his excellences, to be looked at, and admired by his creatures. We cannot, consistently with the greatness and dignity of his character, conceive this to be an object worthy of him, and sufficient to have induced him to exert his Almighty energy in the production of external things. We should thus separate his interests from those of his creatures, and convert the act of creation into an exhibition, and men into mere spectators of its magnificent scenery. The Maker of the universe is the Parent of its living inhabitants, and particularly of those who were endowed with intelligence; and in giving them existence, was influenced by the principle of benevolence. While other perfections are revealed in the fabric of creation, we must refer its origin to the goodness of the Diety, who, enjoying infinite happiness in himself, was willing to diffuse happiness around him. It may be objected that, if this was his design, it has been frustrated by the introduction of sin, with its consequence, misery. But, besides that still even in our world there is a copious, I had almost said, a profuse distribution of the riches of his liberality, the remedial scheme of redemption, which is intended to restore the happiness forfeited by sin, seems to confirm our idea of the diffusion of happiness being the design of creation; and it should farther be considered that, as the universe fills the unknown regions of space, and, we have reason to believe, is peopled with innumerable sentient beings, what has happened in our diminutive planet, and among the celestial spirits, may be a deduction from the general good not greater than that of a unit from millions. By what motive can we conceive Him, who is independent and self-sufficient, to have been influenced to scatter through the mighty void suns and worlds, teeming with life, but that he might contemplate the spectacle, which must be pleasing to his benevolent nature, of countless myriads rejoicing in his bounty, blessed by the emanations of his love, and rendering to him the willing tribute of gratitude and praise?

LECTURE XXXVIII.

ON ANGELS.

Existence of Angels—Date of their Creation—Their Nature—Divided into two classes—Characteristics of Good Angels—Their Offices in the affairs of Providence; and, in particular, their Ministry to the Saints—Are there Guardian Angels?

In my last Lecture, in speaking of the heavens, I slightly adverted to the Angels as the inhabitants of that glorious region of the universe, in which God manifests himself in the full splendour of his perfections. The history of this higher order of creatures, is of too much importance to be dismissed with an occasional notice, and is peculiarly interesting to us, as our affairs are intimately connected with the agency of Angels, whether they have retained their integrity, or have apostatized from God, and become corrupt and malignant.

I begin with the common observation, that the word Angel is a name, not of nature, but of office. It signifies literally a messenger, or a person sent. This is the primary meaning of ἄγγελος in Greek, and מלאך in Hebrew, whether it is used in reference to human beings, or to invisible agents. It seems on one occasion at least, to denote persons invested with authority over others, and the Angels of the seven churches are probably their bishops or presidents.

That there are such beings as those whom we call Angels, in the common acceptation of the term, it might seem impossible for any person to deny who had read the Scriptures, and considered them as worthy of credit. Yet Luke informs us, that the Sadducees said that there was no resurrection, neither Angel nor Spirit.* It has caused no small surprise, that while they acknowledged the inspiration of the sacred books of the Jews, they should have ventured to controvert a fact so explicitly asserted in them; and curiosity has been excited to discover by what reasoning, or what pretexts, they justified their unbelief. It has been supposed that they explained all the passages in which Angels are mentioned, in a figurative sense; or that they understood them to be temporary appearances, caused by the power of God, which vanished as soon as the purpose intended by them was accomplished. It is probable that Justin Martyr refers to the Sadducees, when he says, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, that some said that God, when he pleases, makes his power come forth, and again draws it back to himself, and that in this manner he made Angels. According to this opinion, they were not real and permanent substances, but spectres which, after a short time, dissolved into air, or disappeared like the colours of the rainbow. There have been moderns who coincided with the Sadducees in denying the existence of Angels, and affirmed that good Angels signify good thoughts, and bad Angels sinful thoughts. The opinion of at least some Unitarians respecting the former is, that they are manifestations of Divine power; the idea of such beings as devils is generally, if not universally, exploded by them; and in the usual manner, the language of Scripture is wrested to favour this hypothesis. It is not, surely, necessary that we should enter upon a formal refutation of the doctrine of either the ancient or the modern Sadducees. There would be no end of disputation, if every thing which might be said without the slightest appearance of reason, were deemed worthy of a serious answer. We feel no disposition to contend with a fool, who denies that the sun is shining at mid-day. If we can believe our own eyes when we peruse the sacred pages, and trust that we understand the meaning of words, we can entertain no more doubt of the existence of Angels than of that of man; and if some choose to spend their time in elaborate attempts to prove, that what is, is not, we may leave them to amuse themselves as they please.

To the question, When were Angels created? we can return only a general answer. Moses has not made mention of them, unless, with some, we suppose them to be included in the hosts of heaven; but these seem rather to signify the celestial luminaries, the sun, moon, and stars. Different reasons have been assigned for this omission, of which I know not whether any is satisfactory, as, indeed, is not to be expected, when men attempt to point out the motives of a writer who lived more than three thousand years ago, and particularly of a writer who was guided in the composition of his works by the Spirit of inspiration. We have no reason, however, to think that the creation of Angels preceded the time to which Moses refers in the first chapter of Genesis. A prior date was assigned by many of the ancients, and some moderns have concurred with them; but it is a mere conjecture, and seems to be at variance with the general language of Scripture, which represents the creation of the visible universe as preceded by eternity, when the Almighty existed alone. To affirm that Angels were created before the earth, and the heavens stretched over it, destroys the argument for the eternity of our Saviour, which the Apostle draws from these words of the Psalmist as addressed to him, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands;"* and that priority to the visible creation is equivalent to eternity, is evident from the ninetieth Psalm, which is intitled, A Prayer of Moses, the man of God:—"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."† The sacred historian does certainly teach, that the heavens were created at the same time with the earth; and although he takes no notice of the inhabitants of the heaven of heavens, there is ground to believe that that was the date of their existence. On what day they were created, is a question of mere curiosity. The following words have been understood to signify that they were created on the first day. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding;—when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."‡ It appears that they were present when this fabric was reared, and celebrated the praises of the Divine Architect; and farther it is to no purpose to inquire.

Angels are spiritual beings. As such they are represented in a passage of the Psalms, which is quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire."‖ A modern critic has translated it thus: "Who maketh the winds his messengers, and flaming fire his ministers," in contradiction to the known usage of the Greek language, which, by prefixing the article to the noun ἀγγελους,§ clearly marks them out as the subject of discourse, and πνευματα¶ as the property or quality affirmed of them. Angels are spirits; and no better definition, although it is of the negative kind, can be given of a spirit than that of our Saviour, who said to his terrified disciples, "Handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."** It is vain for us to inquire into the essence of a spirit. It eludes our search; but not more than does the essence of body, of which we know only the properties. Nothing is more foolish, and I may say unintelligible, than the definition of some philosophers, that the essence of spirit consists in thought. They might with equal propriety say, that the essence of matter is colour, taste, or extension. But as every person, whom false philosophy has not deprived of com-

* Acts xxiii. 8.

* Heb. i. 10, and Ps. cii. 25. † Ps. xc. 2. ‡ Job xxxviii. 4, 7.
‖ Heb. i. 7, and Ps. civ. 4. § Angels.
¶ Spirits. ** Luke xxiv. 39.

mon sense, perceives that colour supposes something coloured, and extension something extended, so, it is equally evident that thought implies a thinking substance. A materialist, who supposes thought to be the effect of the organization, and motions of matter, may allege that he is unable to conceive the existence of a pure spirit; but, for the same reason, he must believe the Divine essence to be material; and it is but a step from thence to atheism, or the belief that the Deity is merely the unknown cause of attraction and gravitation, and the other laws and affections of body. To us who are convinced, by reason and revelation, that there is an immaterial principle in man, there is no difficulty in admitting an order of incorporeal beings, who inhabit the higher regions of the universe. It is no objection to the spirituality of their essence, that they are, and must be understood to be, in a particular place. Locality is the necessary attribute of a creature: it has an *ubi*, as the Schoolmen speak; if it is here, it is not there. We, indeed, are accustomed to think of place only in relation to body, because we are corporeal beings, and perceive objects and relations by means of our senses. But reason tells us that spirits also must have a place, although it can give us no assistance in conceiving how they are in it. At the same time, there is a fact familiar to us which confirms this dictate of reason, and we find it in ourselves; for if we have souls as well as bodies, they are confined to a place, as our experience assures us. Our thoughts may wander to the most distant regions, and pass in a moment from heaven to earth, but we ourselves remain in a particular spot. Nor is it any objection to the spirituality of Angels, that they have often appeared, and performed such actions as we perform by means of our bodies. We read also of appearances of God, but do not infer from them that he has corporeal members. In all such cases, a body was formed by the power of God, that his ministers might be seen, and might hold intercourse with men; and when it had served its purpose, it was no doubt laid aside.

Angels are immortal spirits; as we may infer from those words of our Lord, in which he announces the future condition of the righteous: "Neither can they die any more: for they are like," or rather equal to, "the Angels,"* ἰσάγγελοι. It may be supposed, that their immortality is the natural consequence of their immateriality. Not consisting of parts, they are not liable to be dissolved. But the proper ground is the will of God, upon which the continuance either of matter or of spirit depends; and this will be more evident, if we reflect, that the laws of nature are nothing but the permanent agency of the Creator in a determinate manner; that it is his power which sustains the universe, and prevents it from returning to nothing; and that conservation, as we formerly showed, is not improperly called a continual creation. The human body does not die by crumbling into pieces, but by causes which put a stop to the motions upon which life depends. Sometimes, indeed, it is previously wasted by disease, and its vital parts are consumed; but often it falls in full vigour, and without any preparatory process. There is an inaccuracy and a false statement in representing death as owing to the divisibility of matter, as is always done when the indivisibility of spirit is assigned as the cause of its immortality. The dissolution of the body is not the cause, but the consequence of death. Had Adam been obedient to the voice of his Maker, his body would have been immortal as well as his soul; and although the future bodies of the saints, however highly refined, will still be material, yet, we have heard, that they will be "equal to the Angels." It is not, therefore, the spiritual essence of the latter which accounts for their immortality, but the will of God. He willed that they should never die, even although they should be guilty of sin; but in this respect they have no pre-eminence above the souls of men, which are not injured by the stroke of death, but merely separated from that portion of matter, which they had animated for a time, and are destined to animate again.

The following observations relate exclusively to good Angels; and I shall reserve what I have to say concerning the Angels of darkness to another occasion.

First, They are intelligent creatures, and are endowed with a high degree of knowledge and wisdom. That this was the belief of the Jews, is evident from the words of the woman of Tekoah to David: "As an Angel of God, so is my Lord the King, to discern good and bad." And again she says, "My Lord is wise according to the wisdom of an Angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth."* She expressed, no doubt, the common belief of her country respecting Angels; and although in itself it is not decisive, yet we are led to assent to it by a consideration of the case. They are confessedly creatures, of a higher order than men; they enjoy opportunities of discovery which we do not possess; and they are free from those impediments to which we are subjected by our connection with the body, which limits our range of observation, and lays us under the necessity of receiving knowledge by the medium of the senses. A degree of knowledge was originally communicated to them proportionable to the superiority of their nature and rank, by which they were qualified for the service of their Maker. It has since been augmented by observation and experience, and by immediate revelations; and, it may be presumed, will go on progressively for ever. There is no doubt that the highest attainments of men, when compared with theirs, are like those of children; that subjects which we grasp after a tedious and painful investigation, are perceived by them at a glance; that many things, which to us are mysteries, to them are plain; and as they are represented as inquiring into redemption,† and learning wisdom by the Church,‡—not, you will observe, from its lessons, but from the Divine dispensations towards it,—that wonderful scheme presents itself to them with a glory, of which the most enlightened saint upon earth can form only a faint conception. Still, however, it must be considered, that their knowledge is limited, and on this ground, we have stated it to be progressive. They could not know all things, unless they were equal to God; they do not know the secrets of the heart, which are open only to his eye. We might indulge in curious speculations concerning the mode in which they acquire knowledge, and hold communication with one another; but we could not arrive at any thing satisfactory. Our own spirits being united to a body, and perceiving external things by the senses, we can form no idea of the operations of a pure spirit, nor understand how it is made sensible of the existence, and qualities, and motions of matter and material beings.

Secondly, They are holy beings. Such they must have been when they came from the hand of God, pure like the ray of light when it issues from the sun; and such, many of them have continued, although others have fallen into sin. Hence they are called the holy Angels,‖ and the ministers of God who do his will;§ and they are exhibited as patterns to us in the prayer which Christ taught his disciples: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." They have now existed during almost six thousand years; but not in one instance have they done any thing which was displeasing to God, nor has a single sinful thought arisen in their minds. They were once tempted; but they indignantly resisted the solicitation of counsel and example; they have witnessed many a foul display of human and angelical depravity, but have not received the slightest moral taint. Their

* Luke xx. 30.

* 2 Sam. xiv. 17, 20. † 1 Pet. i. 12. ‡ Eph. iii. 10.
‖ Matt. xxv. 31, &c. § Ps. ciii. 31.

constant employment is to praise God and to serve him; and his commands are always listened to and cheerfully obeyed. Their piety is manifested in their reverence and humility; and the holiness of the Divine nature is contemplated by them with reverence and delight. They cover their faces with their wings, and cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."* It is on this account, that although they are benevolent beings, they feel no reluctance to execute the judgments of God upon his enemies; and they will perform, with pleasure, the final office of this kind, by gathering "out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity," and casting "them into a furnace of fire."†

Thirdly, They are beings of great activity and strength. We connect activity with the idea of a spirit, especially a spirit not encumbered with material organs. That of the Angels is represented by the description of them as creatures who have wings and fly. It is manifestly figurative, because they are pure spirits; but it is intended to express the speed with which they execute their commissions, as of all visible creatures, those move with the greatest velocity which have wings. A created spirit must exist in some definite portion of space, and its motion must consist in its removal from one place to another; but what is the motion of a spirit we cannot tell. It is swifter no doubt than that of bodies; and there is a passage in Scripture, which shews how rapidly they can transport themselves from heaven to earth. As soon as Daniel began his supplication recorded in the ninth chapter of his Book, the command was given, and the Angel Gabriel, being caused to fly swiftly, touched him while he was yet praying about the time of the evening oblation. "Thinkest thou," said our Lord to Peter, "that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of Angels?"‡ In strength they are said to excel,‖ and in Scripture they are called mighty Angels.§ We connect our idea of strength with that of bodily organs, as the instruments by which it is exerted; but we should reflect that the seat of strength is in the mind. It is the mind which moves the members of the body, and puts forth its energies by them. All that we know is, that when the soul wills, the body moves; we see the effect, and know the cause, but the relation between them we cannot explain; and there is reason to believe that, if such had been the will of God, our soul might have acted with equal power upon any other piece of matter, either constantly or occasionally. The relation between soul and body, in consequence of which they influence each other, is unquestionably an arbitrary constitution. We can therefore feel no difficulty in conceiving spirits without bodies, to be endowed by the Creator with power to act upon matter in general, just as our souls have power to act upon our bodies; and the *modus* is not more inconceivable in the one case than in the other, or rather is equally inexplicable in both. We know, that Angels are possessed of this power, for they are represented in Scripture as defending the bodies of some, and inflicting plagues upon those of others; and as performing stupendous works, which far exceed human ability. But there are limits to their power as well as to ours. We must not attribute to them the power of working real miracles, or suspending the laws of nature, for this is the province of Omnipotence. They cannot call back the separated spirit from the invisible world, and raise the corrupted body from the ground: It is "God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."¶

Lastly, They are happy beings. The recollection of the past creates no uneasiness, and the prospect of the future awakens no fear or anxiety. They have always served God with fidelity, and they will always enjoy his love. Their usual residence is heaven, the region of bliss; but their felicity is not impaired by their visits to the earth. There they behold many an offensive scene, which must excite strong disapprobation; but no disquieting emotion is felt. They have acts of vengeance to perform; but, as we have already observed, they detest sin, and glow with zeal for the glory of God, and perform, therefore, with pleasure any service which will redound to his honour. "In heaven, the Angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."* They enjoy the beatific vision, and must, therefore, be happy; but let us not think that they are deprived of it when they are sent on errands to other parts of the universe. God is still near to them, and they retain a full sense of his love.

We know little concerning the external economy of those glorious spirits; but from some passages in Scripture it has been inferred that there are different ranks and degrees among them. The Platonic philosophers divided their genii or demons into three orders, the supra-celestial, the celestial, and the sub-celestial. The same number of orders has been assigned by the Jews; and a similar division has been adopted by some christian writers. Among these the chief place belongs to Dionysius, the Areopagite, or rather to the person who assumed his name and, under its authority, gave to the world his reveries respecting the heavenly hierarchy. According to him, there are three classes, the supreme, the middle, and the last; the supreme comprehending cherubim, seraphim, and thrones; the middle comprehending dominions, virtues, and powers; and the last comprehending principalities, archangels, and angels. Each of these classes is subdivided into three, so that upon the whole, there are nine orders. This is a baseless fabric of fancy, which could obtain credit only among those, who, believing the author to be the real Dionysius, were persuaded that he had derived his knowledge from immediate revelation, or from the mouths of the Apostles.

Whoever was the author of these pretended discoveries, he was unquestionably chargeable with intruding into things not seen. We cannot safely proceed a single step farther than the Scriptures lead us. All that we learn from them, is the different names which are given to the spirits of light;—cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, angels, and archangel in the singular number, for I do not find that it ever occurs in the plural. But we cannot tell what is the ground of these names; whether they are expressive of a difference of rank, or of office, or originate in some other cause; or why it is that one is called a cherub, and another a seraph. The different names, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, may be used simply to denote the dignity and power of angelical beings, as they are expressive of the highest degrees of honour and authority among men. It has been a subject of dispute, whether the title Archangel is descriptive of a created Angel, or is a designation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the prince or ruler of principalities and powers. By many he is supposed to be meant in the book of Revelation,† when Michael and his Angels are said to have fought against the dragon and his Angels; and in the book of Daniel, where it is said, "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people."‡ In the epistle of Jude, Michael is called the Archangel: "Yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."‖ But this passage has been considered as unfavourable to the hypothesis, that the Archangel was the Son of God, be-

* Isa. vi. 3. † Matt. xiii. 41, 42. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 53.
‖ Ps. ciii. 20. § 2 Thess. i. 7. ¶ Rom. iv. 17.

* Matt. xviii. 10. † Rev. xii. 7. ‡ Dan. xii. 1. ‖ Jude 9.

cause it represents him, long prior to his incarnation and humiliation, as under the authority of law, and abstaining from opprobrious language from reverence for God. The Archangel seems to be plainly distinguished from our Saviour in the following words, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God;"* for if the voice of the Archangel means the voice of Christ himself, we can see no reason why it should be spoken of as the voice of a different being. Besides, in the tenth chapter of Daniel, Michael, who is elsewhere called the Archangel, is said to be "one of the chief princes;"† a title which could not with propriety be given to our Lord, who is not one of the Angels, but above them all, the head of all principality and power. The phrase "one of the chief princes," if there is a reference to Angels, as the name Michael implies, would lead us to think that there are several chiefs or leaders of the army of heaven; and consequently, that there is a subordination established among them, although the details are unknown. It is remarkable, however, as I have already observed, that Archangel is always used in the singular number. We must leave the question undecided, and may be content to remain in uncertainty, as it is not an article of faith.

God employs Angels in the administration of the affairs of providence; not, however, because he stands in need of their assistance, but for reasons with which we are not fully acquainted. This was represented to Jacob in a dream, when he saw "a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reaching to heaven; and behold the Angels of God ascending and descending upon it."‡ This representation justifies the saying of our great epic poet, that

> "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
> Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep."‖

We do not suppose that by them the great laws of nature were established, and are upheld; for in these we acknowledge the immediate agency of Almighty power; but that they are concerned, by the direction of the Supreme Ruler, in particular events. There are many passages of Scripture which prove this fact; some of which will be mentioned when we come to speak of their ministrations to the saints. Angels were employed in the Divine dispensations towards the Israelites, and particularly while they were residing in the wilderness. When God was offended with them after they had set up the golden calf, and worshipped it, he told Moses that he would not go up in the midst of them, but would send an Angel before them.§ Upon the earnest prayer of Moses, this threatening was revoked, and the Lord said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."¶ But when, on a former occasion, God promised to send an Angel before them,** neither Moses was alarmed, nor the people, for this was not a created Angel, but the Angel of the covenant, and consequently God himself; and accordingly it is added, "My name is on him;" and he is represented as possessed of Sovereign power, to pardon or not to pardon their transgressions. What has been now said is a digression; but it serves to reconcile two passages which seem to be at variance, as what is announced as a favour in the one, is viewed as a punishment in the other. But, although God did not send a created Angel before the Israelites, yet those glorious spirits were the ministers of his providence to them. We have explicit notice of their agency in the most solemn transaction in the wilderness, the promulgation of the law with such awful pomp from Mount Sinai. It is called in one place, "the word spoken by Angels,"†† and in another is said to have been received, ως διαταγας αγγελων;* a difficult expression, signifying "by the disposition of Angels, or "by the ministration of Angels," or, "amidst ranks of Angels." "The Lord came from Sinai,—and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them."† The interference of Angels in the affairs of the world, is pointed out in the tenth chapter of Daniel; when the person who spoke to him, and was undoubtedly an Angel, informs him that he was opposed by the prince of the kingdom of Persia; and that Michael, one of the chief princes, came to his assistance.‡ There is another example of the agency of Angels, in the destruction of the army of Sennacherib, who had defied the living God. "It came to pass that the Angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand; and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses."‖ It has been supposed that the instrument was the hot wind which is known in the east, and causes sudden death; and that it is figuratively called the Angel of the Lord, because it was sent by him. But there is no occasion for this attempt to strip the narrative of what would be called, its poetical machinery, and to render it as agreeable as possible to the principles of philosophy, by bringing forward to view only natural causes. There is the same reason for believing, that a real Angel was concerned in this as in any other case where Angels are mentioned; and whether his purpose was effected by corrupted air or by lightning, it was under his management and direction. Many events which take place in such a manner as to appear quite natural, may yet be brought to pass by the ministry of Angels. To them, for aught that we can tell, may be referred the unaccountable impressions upon the minds of men; the presentiments of futurity; the sudden resolutions, and unpremeditated movements, which seem in themselves to be of little or no moment, but which are followed by consequences of the greatest importance to them, and those with whom they are connected. We are ignorant, in a great measure, of the means by which God governs the world, and particularly the minds of men; and in this department there may be ample scope for the interference of invisible beings.

I shall devote the remainder of this lecture to the ministry of Angels to the saints. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"§

First, They have been employed in revealing the will of God to his people. I might produce the instances of Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel; but, as I do not mean to enlarge upon this particular, I only observe, that the Revelation, that prophetic history of the Church to the consummation of all things, was dictated to the beloved disciple by an Angel. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his Angel unto his servant John."¶

Secondly, It has been supposed that they suggest good thoughts to the saints. It is acknowledged that we can produce no positive proof from Scripture in favour of this hypothesis; and some have objected to it as entrenching upon the work of the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to enlighten and sanctify the soul. But this is a very weak objection, as it would equally exclude all the assistance which men give to one another in religion, by suggesting topics of pious meditation, and endeavouring to excite holy affections. Reasoning from analogy, would lead us to adopt the affirmative; for, if the spirits of darkness stir up evil thoughts and pas-

* 1 Thess. iv. 16. † Dan. x. 13. ‡ Gen. xxviii. 12.
‖ Par. Lost, B. iv. l. 677. § Exod. xxxii. 34.
¶ Ib. xxxiii. 14. ** Exod. xxiii. 20. †† Heb. ii. 2.

* Acts vii. 53. † Deut. xxxiii. 2. ‡ Dan. x. 13.
‖ 2 Kings xix. 35. § Heb. i. 14. ¶ Rev. i. 1.

sions in the minds of men, why should we not conceive that the spirits of light are equally active in exciting such as are good?

Thirdly, It is more certain that Angels are appointed to watch over the saints, and to preserve them from dangers. In two passages of the Old Testament this office is expressly assigned to the Angels:—"There shall no evil befal thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling; for he shall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."* In another place, the Psalmist says, "The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."† The same doctrine is taught by our Saviour, when he urges the care of the Angels over those who belong to him, as a reason why the meanest of them should not be despised or ill treated:—"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their Angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."‡ The design of their ministry is not to defend the saints from every evil or calamity, because it is the will of God that often they should suffer affliction, and trials are over-ruled for their good; but from such other calamities as would not be subservient to this end, they are preserved by their vigilant guardians. They are with them when they lie down and rise up, when they sit in the house and walk by the way. Their agency is not visible and miraculous, like that of the Angel who delivered Peter from prison;‖ it is secret, and is carried on without disturbing the order of nature.

Fourthly, They are employed, as we have seen, to execute divine judgments upon the enemies of the saints, and thus minister for them, by enfeebling, disarming, and destroying those by whom they would be injured. I have already given an instance in the fate of the Assyrian army which had invaded Judea; and I may remind you of another, recorded in the Acts, the miserable end of Herod the persecutor, who was smitten by an Angel.§ In the Revelation of John, which is, indeed, highly figurative, but foretells real events and their causes, Angels are represented as the agents in the terrible revolutions by which the wicked will be punished, and the Church will be delivered. We are not permitted to see them, as David was, who beheld an Angel standing over Jerusalem, with a sword in his hand;¶ their operations are concealed from us by the veil of natural causes. But it is consoling to the saints to be assured, by testimony which is not to be disputed, that those who are for them are more in number and greater in power than those who are against them; and that not only is their cause, and that of truth and righteousness, patronized by the Supreme Ruler of the universe, but there are upon its side myriads of glorious spirits, one of whom could crush the combined potentates of the earth.

Fifthly, It is their office to convey the souls of the saints into the mansions of bliss. Having attended them during the journey of life, or at least from the moment of their conversion, they are present at the closing scene; and when their spirits have escaped from the earthly prison, they fly away with them, and deliver up their precious charge. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, it is said that the latter died and was carried by Angels into Abraham's bosom.** Notwithstanding the figurative character of the composition, it may be presumed that our Lord intended this fact to be literally understood. To our natural feelings, a death-bed scene is revolting and afflicting. We behold a helpless human being, emaciated by disease, panting for breath, and convulsed with pain; his countenance pale, his lips quivering, and his brow bedewed with a cold sweat; and, with his expiring groans, are mingled the lamentations of his disconsolate friends. But, were not the spiritual world hidden by a veil, we should see the glorious inhabitants of heaven surrounding his bed, and sympathising with the sufferer,—for even the Lord of Angels has a fellow-feeling of the infirmities of his people—yet rejoicing at his unmurmuring patience, and his stedfast hope, which looks at a brighter world; and when the struggle was over, bearing his spirit away to their own abode, where "there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain."

Lastly, The Angels will minister for the saints at the second coming of Christ. We know, from Scripture, that they will be his attendants; and we learn also, that they will have important services to perform. By them the saints will be "caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."* At the great harvest of the world, as our Lord has taught us, the angels will be the reapers; and as they will then pluck up the tares, and throw them into the fire, so they will gather the wheat into the garner.† "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."‡

When we are speaking of the ministry of angels, the question naturally occurs, whether there is any foundation for the opinion not only of the Jews, but of many Christians in ancient and modern times, that there are guardian angels; or in other words, that there is assigned to each individual a particular angel, who attends him during the whole course of his life. Some seem to consider this opinion as almost heretical, and reject it as dangerous; although where the danger lies, it is not easy to perceive. It appears to me to be a very harmless opinion, and to be by no means unnatural, as, according to our ideas, a multiplicity of affairs is best managed by a division of labour, and by allotting to each of those who are engaged in it, his particular department. The great objection is, that we have no evidence of its truth. The Scriptures do not enter into details upon the subject, and only say, "He shall give his angels charge over thee,"‖ representing the care of the saints as a general concern. There are, indeed, several instances in which a single angel was employed; but it does not hence follow that this was his exclusive province. Our Lord says concerning his disciples, that their angels beheld the face of his Father;§ but nothing can be fairly inferred from this passage, except that the heavenly hosts are appointed to watch over them. The strongest argument is founded on the words of the disciples, who were praying for the deliverance of Peter on the night before his expected execution, and when the servant affirmed that it was he who was knocking at the gate, exclaimed, "It is his angel;"¶ for they could not believe that it was Peter himself. Attempts have been made to evade this argument, by giving a different meaning to the words; but I think they are absurd. There is no doubt that these disciples, being Jews, did believe that there were guardian angels; but, we do not know that any of them were inspired men, and therefore we are not bound to adopt their sentiments, unless they be supported by higher authority.

Christians should be grateful for the care of God exercised towards them by the ministry of Angels, and should admire that wonderful economy which has united the two great families of heaven and earth, which sin had separated, and inspired with aversion and hostility. What a high honour is conferred upon them, in having such guardians! How safe are they under their protection! and with what caution and reverence should they act in the presence of witnesses so august and holy!

* Ps. xci. 10—12. † Ps. xxxiv. 7. ‡ Matt. xviii. 10.
‖ Acts xii. § Ib. 23. ¶ 1 Chron. xxi. 16. ** Luke xvi. 22.

* 1 Thess. iv. 17. † Matt. xiii. 39. ‡ Matt. xxiv. 31.
‖ Psalm xci. 11. § Matt. xviii. 10. ¶ Acts xii. 15.

LECTURE XXXIX.

ON ANGELS.

Fallen Angels—Remarks on their Fall—Its effects upon their Moral and Intellectual Qualities, and upon their State or Condition—Their subordination to Satan—Their Employment—Their Power over the Bodies of Men—Demoniacs—Power of Fallen Angels over the Minds of Men, considered.

It appears from Scripture, that there are two classes of Angels, the same in nature, but distinguished by their moral qualities, their employments, and the usual place of their residence. Those of the one class are holy, are engaged in the service of God, and inhabit the regions of light. Those of the other class are depraved, are active in propagating sin and misery among the human race, and are doomed to dwell in the region of darkness and sorrow. Of these I purpose to speak in this Lecture.

I begin with observing, that the whole angelical order was created pure; and this position is not only countenanced by Scripture, but is necessary to vindicate the character of God. The question concerning the origin of evil, caused much perplexity to the speculative men of the heathen world; and in order to account for it, they had recourse to the hypothesis of the malignity of matter, or to that of the existence of an Evil Being, who was independent upon the Author of good. But as the latter supposition is repugnant to reason, as well as to revelation; so the former, which, by the bye, is unintelligible and absurd, is totally inapplicable to the case of spiritual beings, who have no connexion with matter, and therefore could not be tainted by it. They must, therefore, have existed in a state of innocence; for, were we to admit the idea, that they were originally corrupt, we should charge their sin upon their Maker. But, as he is essentially holy, it was impossible that there should be the slightest stain of sin upon any intelligent creature, when it came from his hands; as only pure light can proceed from the sun. The angels of whom we are speaking, are said not to have kept their first estate;* from which words it is plain, that they were once in every respect similar to the angels who stand in the presence of God.

How long they retained their integrity, we are not able to determine, as Scripture is silent; but, as we have no reason to think that angels were created before our world, we may say of them as well as of men, that "being in honour, they abode not." It was by the agency of one of them that our first parents were seduced; and although it is absurd to suppose that the fall of man took place in the same day on which he was made, yet there is good ground to suppose, that paradise was only for a short time the abode of purity and peace.

When we think of the mode in which sin could find admission into the mind of a creature perfectly holy, we perceive that much obscurity rests upon the subject. If, as is necessarily implied, the understanding were free from error, and clearly apprehended the nature and relation of things, how could it form a false judgment, or be imposed upon by the sophistry of others? If the heart was full of love to God, and under the uncontrolled influence of his authority, how could any representation excite a wayward affection, or a desire which it was improper to indulge? The difficulty is greater in the case of angels than in that of man; for, as he was connected with matter, and subject to the influence of the senses, his attention might be diverted, and his judgment biassed, by allurements addressed to them, while pure spirits were secured against any such temptations. But, it is in vain to bring forward arguments to prove that a fact is impossible or improbable, if we have it in our power to shew that it has actually taken place. As men sinned in the earthly paradise, through the subtilty of a tempter, so angels sinned in the heavenly paradise, without a tempter; for although we do not possess a history of their apostasy, yet we know that they were not solicited, as man was, by some being of superior artifice, because they were the sole inhabitants of heaven.

There has been a diversity of opinion with respect to the sin of the angels. Some of the ancients imagined that it was lust, having given this sense to these words in Genesis, "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."* It is not possible to conceive a more ridiculous opinion, since, besides other absurdities, which are so obvious that it is not necessary to point them out, it makes the fall of angels long posterior to the fall of man, in direct contradiction to the Scripture, which affirms that he was seduced by the devil. A modern author, Cocceius, has maintained that, as we read of no prior sin of the angels, their first sin consisted in tempting our first parents; not perceiving, that he mistakes the effect for the cause, as it is plain that they must have sinned, before the idea of seducing others could have entered into their minds. Others have thought that their sin was envy; envy either of those angels who were superior to them in rank and dignity, or of man whom God had created in his own image, and invested with dominion over this lower world. Lastly, the most common opinion is, that their sin was pride, and it is founded on these words of an Apostle: "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil."† But how pride arose, it is not so easy to tell. There was no being to solicit them to it, or to suggest it. But their own rank might be their temptation. Concentrating their thoughts upon their own excellences, and admiring them, they might gradually forget their relation to God as their Creator. They might lose the sense of their dependence upon him; and as soon as this feeling was suspended, humility was at an end, and a train of arrogant imaginations and claims would occupy its place. They would then see only themselves; their self-importance would be flattered by the view; and having erred in heart, they might proceed openly to renounce their allegiance to God. Milton has supposed that their pride was excited by a command to all the heavenly powers to do homage to the Son of God as their Lord; that Satan, who was higher than the rest,

> "could not bear
> Through pride that sight, and thought himself impaired:"‡

and that the armies under his command listened to his counsel, and joined in his revolt:

> "Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend
> The supple knee? Ye will not, if I trust
> To know ye right, or if ye know yourselves
> Natives and sons of heaven."‖

His powerful imagination has wrought out a sublime description of the apostasy and overthrow of angels, from a single passage in the book of Revelation, which however, relates to a different subject. "And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."§ Amidst this diversity of opinion, the most probable is that which makes pride the first sin of angels; but the means by which it was excited, and the mode in which it operated, are unknown.

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* Jude 6.

* Gen. vi. 2. † 1 Tim. iii. 6. ‡ Par. Lost, B. v. 664.
‖ Ib. 787. § Rev. xii. 7—9.

Angels were not placed under a federal head, like the human race, which existed in the beginning solely in its progenitors, and was to be deduced from them in successive generations. As they were all created at once, each individual seems to have been committed to his own care, and was to stand or fall according to his personal conduct. The only effect which one could have upon another, was by example and counsel, and excitation to good or evil. Had there been a federal representation among angels as among men, the whole order would have shared alike in its consequences. The individuality of the moral agency of angels, if I may speak so, is manifest from the fact, that while some revolted, others maintained their allegiance. Hence arises a new subject of speculation. It does not appear that the apostasy of angels was successive, or that some apostatized at one time, and some at another; but we have some reason to believe that the revolt was simultaneous. How, then, was the concurrence of a multitude obtained? It is incredible that the same thought should, at the same moment, have suggested itself to myriads; or that, without any external cause, the same temptation should have affected so many independent minds. It is probable, therefore, that, as on earth, the woman being deceived enticed her husband, so in heaven one angel, or a few angels, having admitted sin into their thoughts and affections, exerted their influence with success upon others; and that, although the address to his followers, which our great poet has put into the mouth of Satan, is a mere creation of fancy, yet by some similar means a general conspiracy was formed. The Scriptures favour the conclusion, that there was one angel with whom it originated, by the preeminence which it assigns to him, and by speaking of "the devil and his angels."

It is impossible to tell how many angels were engaged in this revolt. They are represented as many; but nothing is said about their number. The idea that they amounted to a third part of the inhabitants of heaven, has arisen from a mistaken view of a passage which relates to a different subject. "And his tail," that is, the tail of the dragon, "drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth."§

The fall of angels effected no change in their nature. With respect to their essence, they are still pure spirits, immortal, and possessed of great power and activity. But a change has taken place in regard to their qualities, intellectual and moral. Originally of a higher order of creatures than man, they retain their superiority in mental ability, although it cannot be doubted that it is greatly impaired. Man did not, in consequence of his fall, cease to be a rational creature; he has even now more understanding than the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, and is capable of high exertions of intellect. Yet, his knowledge is more laboriously acquired than it would have been, if sin had not shed its malignant influence upon his body and mind, is far more limited, and is mixed with many errors arising from the illusions of sense, and the influence of prejudice. It is agreeable to analogy to conceive, that the intellectual powers of fallen angels have been blighted; that their understandings are obscured, and perverted by their passions; and that their wisdom, which has degenerated into cunning, often leads them astray, and involves them in perplexity and confusion. Their moral qualities have undergone a total change. Of their original holiness, not a vestige remains. Sin is now so natural to them, that it seems almost to be their essence; it is the element in which they live and move. Sin is the subject of their thoughts, and gives a character to all their actions. Evil is their only good. There is an important difference between them and men, which is worthy of particular attention. The depravity of men is, in some degree, checked and concealed by certain natural feelings and affections, which, although not virtuous, have the effect of virtue in restraining them from acts of malice and cruelty, and leading them to perform deeds of justice and beneficence. The wisdom of God has permitted these to remain, because the earth would have been turned into a scene of confusion, society would have been dissolved, and the human race would have been extinguished, if the propensities of the human heart had been permitted to operate without control. But we have no ground to believe that there is any thing analogous to these affections and feelings in apostate angels. Sin rages in them unrestrained; every malignant and furious passion boils within them: and if they experience any relief from their sufferings, it consists in wreaking their malice and cruelty upon man. We may judge how sin produced immediately its full effect upon them, from the conduct of the tempter. He had been recently expelled from heaven, and what was his first work? He visited our earth with the most nefarious and vindictive design, to mar its beauty, and to poison and destroy human nature in its source; and he accomplished it by a train of deliberate falsehood, and systematic cruelty. There was no relenting at the thought of a whole race being involved in eternal misery; his dark mind rejoiced in the prospect of myriads for ever enduring the same agonies with himself. "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it."* This passage is strong, and illustrates in a very striking manner the depravity of fallen angels; for what is said of one, is true of them all. The devil is a murderer and a liar, cruel and false. It is his nature to be so. He does not learn falsehood from another, nor is he solicited to it by another; it comes spontaneously from himself; he brings it from the evil treasure of his heart; "when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own."

Various names are given to fallen angels in the Scriptures, which are descriptive of the depravity of their nature. They are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, lying spirits, spiritual wickednesses, and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Their leader is denominated Satan or the adversary, the devil or the accuser, Apollyon or the destroyer, the prince and god of the world, the dragon or the old serpent, and he who has the power of death.

The existence of such beings has been denied by many, and all that is said concerning them in Scripture has been explained in a figurative manner. It has been objected, that the common notion of a devil, having other wicked spirits under his command, is a modification of the doctrine of two principles, which was held by some nations in the east, and was adopted by the Gnostics and Manichees, who, in the first ages, gave so much trouble to the church. It seems to some men to be inconsistent with just ideas of the Almighty power and moral character of God, to suppose that there are malignant spirits continually employed in opposing his designs, and seducing his creatures. But all our reasonings concerning the fitness or unfitness of any thing, are superseded by an authoritative declaration of Scripture. The attempt to explain away its testimony is irreverent, and completely fails; for we may as well deny the existence of good as of bad angels, and turn into allegory any historical narration. It is not more repugnant to the honour of God, that there should be invisible agents who oppose his designs, than that the same thing should be done by embodied spirits, or by men, who daily trample upon his laws; or that we should be tempted by them, than that we should solicit

§ Rev. xii. 4.

* John viii. 44.

one another to sin. The Christian doctrine concerning the devil and his ministers is very different from that of the ancient Persians, or of those sects who held that there was an evil being co-existing with the good, and carrying on perpetual war against him. Besides that it is not liable to the difficulty involved in the idea of a being originally and necessarily evil, it preserves the absolute supremacy and independence of the Creator; for the devil is represented, not as self-existent, and exempt from his authority, but as one of his creatures, who, having become wicked by his own choice, is permitted to live and to act according to his depraved inclinations, but is under the constant restraint of Divine power, so that there are limits beyond which he cannot pass, and his ultimate designs are counteracted and frustrated. The evil, which prevails in the creation, does not exist in spite of the Creator, but because he did not choose to prevent it; and it will be over-ruled to his glory. The devil is his subject, and his minister; for he makes his wrath, as well as the wrath of man, to praise him, and the remainder of it he restrains. It is probable that the oriental doctrine of two principles originated in the traditionary account of an evil being who had revolted from the Creator; and that the extravagant stories of the Gnostics concerning Æons, as they called them, who existed in the pleroma of the Deity; the creation of the world by one or more of them; the corruption of the human race by their influence; and the continual opposition which they made to the Supreme Being; were a distorted representation of the fact, that some of the angels of heaven had fallen, and seduced mankind to join in the rebellion.

The angels who sinned were expelled from heaven, as being unworthy to enjoy its felicity, and incapable of taking any part in its employments. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."* He cast them into *Tartarus*, for Peter uses the word ταρταρωσας. Neither the verb, nor the substantive ταρταρος, occurs in any other place of the New Testament, although frequent in Greek writers; and it is, therefore, from them, that we must learn its meaning on this occasion. Now by Tartarus, they understood the lowest of the infernal regions, the place of darkness and of punishment; in which those, who had been guilty of impiety towards the gods, and of great crimes against men, were confined and tormented. The word, as adopted by the Apostle, conveys the same general idea. Whatever mistakes the heathens committed with respect to the local situation of Tartarus, and the nature of its punishments, Peter, retaining the radical sense of the term, undoubtedly uses it in this passage as equivalent to hell. That is the region assigned to the apostate spirits: and in the sentence of the last judgment, by which wicked men are also doomed to it, it is said to have been "prepared for the devil and his angels." It is represented as a region of darkness and sorrow. Darkness and light, when spoken of in relation to spirits, are metaphorically used; since, not having bodily senses, they are not affected, as we are, by the presence and absence of the sun. The darkness of Tartarus is therefore significant of the deprivation of all joy, and all hope. Having incurred the wrath of their Creator, the fallen angels can experience only evil, and must utterly despair of any favourable change. The positive misery of their state, is also described by figurative language. It is "everlasting fire," which is prepared for the devil and his angels; but spirits can no more be affected by fire than by light. But, as fire applied to the human body causes the most excruciating pain, this image has been chosen to awaken the idea of the most dreadful torment; and that the mind can suffer without the body, or while no injury is done to it, and there is no derangement of its parts, we all know by experience. The fallen angels are wretched as well as wicked. The passage, indeed, which I have quoted, represents them as reserved to the judgment of the great day; and in the Gospels we hear them asking our Saviour, why he had come to torment them before the time; but we are not to infer that at present they are exempt from suffering. These words merely imply that the time of vengeance is not fully come, and that there is reserved for them a more dreadful punishment than that which they are at present enduring.

Although the angels are said to have been cast down into Tartarus, and there to be reserved in chains, we are not to conclude that they are constantly confined to that place. The term, chains, is evidently figurative, and signifies the irreversible sentence by which they are doomed to perdition, or the Almighty power of God by which they are secured. It appears from their history, that they are prisoners at large. The work assigned to them is carried on upon earth; and they must therefore be permitted frequently to visit it. Yet we say, that their proper habitation is Tartarus or hell, as heaven is the habitation of the good angels, although they are much in our world, and may be employed in various offices, in other regions of the universe. After the final judgment, they will be shut up for ever in their dismal dungeon. There will then be a complete separation between the kingdom of darkness, and the kingdom of light. The latter will be the scene of righteousness and peace; no evil shall ever sully its purity, or disorder disturb its harmony; the tempter shall not find entrance into the celestial paradise.

We have seen that it is not perfectly certain that there is a subordination among the angels of light; but that it exists among the angels of darkness, is manifest from such expressions as these: "the devil and his angels," and "the prince of the devils," and by the appropriation of the name, Satan, to an individual, and the mention of "his kingdom," of which all other wicked beings, human and angelical, are subjects. It has been remarked by a late critic, that the word διαβολος, which is rendered *devil* in our version, but properly signifies an *accuser*, is used in the plural number in reference to men, but never occurs in that number when spirits are the subject of discourse. Among these there is only one διαβολος and other impure spirits are expressed by a different name, and are called demons. The distinction is lost in our translation, where both words are indiscriminately rendered devil; but it ought to be attended to, as there was undoubtedly a reason for it, although we are not able to shew in what the difference consists. The words δαιμων, and δαιμονιον,* were used by the Greeks to designate an order of beings who were accounted divine, but inferior to the higher gods, and were the objects of religious worship. To this order belonged the souls of heroes, legislators, and other great men, who were deified after their death. Of the demons acknowledged by the heathens, some were good, and others were bad; but, in their writings, the word generally occurs in a favourable sense. It is in a bad sense that the word is used in the New Testament; in all those cases at least, which relate to the spirits who are associated with the devil, and are under his direction. The fact, then, that there is one devil, and that the rest are called demons, that these demons are his angels, and that the kingdom which they are endeavouring to uphold and extend, is his kingdom, leads to the conclusion, that a monarchy is established among them. With respect to its origin, we cannot tell whether it is founded on a

* 2 Peter ii. 4.

* Dæmon.

subordination, which existed prior to their fall; or is the result of their voluntary submission; or is an arrangement imposed by the will of Providence, for some end to us unknown. We are equally ignorant whether, while one is evidently chief, there may not be a gradation of ranks; as in the kingdoms of men, some, although inferior to the sovereign, are superior to their fellow subjects.

It remains to inquire, in what manner evil angels are employed; and it will appear that their work corresponds with the depravity of their nature, and the malevolence of their dispositions. It is their perpetual aim to dishonour God, and to injure men; and in prosecuting their designs, they submit to no restraint but Almighty power.

We learn from the Scriptures, that they are permitted to exercise power over the bodies of men, and over other things which may have an effect upon them. I might appeal for proof to the first chapter of Job, in which, licence is represented as having been given to Satan to make trial of that good man, and a series of calamities to have ensued, that terminated, as we see in the second chapter, in a painful and loathsome disease, which must be considered as having been caused by the agency of that malignant spirit. That it is a true history, is evident from the references to it in other parts of Scripture, which are altogether inconsistent with the supposition that it is an allegorical description, or dramatic representation, of more recent events. But, if there should be any doubt to what extent the narrative is figurative, I may appeal, in the next place, to the possessions related by the Evangelists, which are instances of power exercised by evil spirits upon the bodies of men, and of the infliction of diseases by them. It has been alleged, indeed, that these were not cases of real possession; that the patients laboured under common diseases, as madness and epilepsy; that the Jews believed that these were caused by the influence of evil spirits; that the Evangelists accommodate their account of them, and of the cure, to the popular belief; and that the patients are called δαιμονιζομενοι,* and are said δαιμονιον εχειν,† solely because the vulgar thought so. But it has been justly observed, that "when we find mention made of the number of demons in particular possessions, their actions so expressly distinguished from those of the men possessed, conversations held by the former in regard to the disposal of them after their expulsion, and accounts given how they were actually disposed of; when we find desires and passions ascribed peculiarly to them, and similitudes taken from the conduct which they usually observe, it is impossible to deny their existence, without admitting that the sacred historians were either deceived themselves in regard to them, or intended to deceive their readers."‡ We must proceed still farther, and say, that our Lord himself favoured the deception, encouraged the people in a foolish superstitious notion, and gave a false representation of the nature of his miracles. It is objected against the credibility of possessions, that they were peculiar to that age, and that we have no certain accounts of them in any prior or subsequent period. It is beyond doubt, however, that they have been supposed to exist in other ages; but, granting that they were confined to the time of the ministry of our Lord and his Apostles, would it not be sufficient to say in answer to the objection, that they were then permitted to furnish an opportunity for displaying the power of our Saviour over the spirits of darkness, and to give sensible attestation to the general design of his coming, which was to "destroy the works of the devil?"‖ To affirm that there never were possessions at any other period, is to reject the testimony of the Jews and other nations, not upon the authority of more credible testimony, but upon presumptions and abstract reasoning. "It is probable," says Dr. Macknight, "that the possessions mentioned in the Gospels, were diseases carried to an uncommon height by the presence and agency of demons. And if this is allowed to have been the true nature of these possessions, there will be found, without doubt, abundant examples of the like possessions in all ages. For there is nothing absurd in supposing that there always have been, and still are in the world, many incurable diseases, which, though commonly attributed to natural causes, are really the effect of the invisible operation of devils, who have power given them for that purpose."*

That the fallen angels exercise power over the minds of men, is an alarming truth, which is proved, in the first place, by the seduction of our first parents; and in the second place, by many facts, and declarations, and admonitions, in the Scriptures. The mode of their agency is concealed; and as it would be vain to make an attempt to discover it, so it would serve no valuable purpose to indulge in conjectures. Of one thing we are certain, that they have no such control over men as to compel them to obey; for such a power would be destructive of moral agency, and would therefore in a great measure defeat their own design, which is to involve us in guilt; they can succeed only by influencing the volition, through the medium of the understanding, and imagination, and passions.

The devil was the lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets under the Mosaic dispensation; and his concern in the idolatry which prevailed over the whole earth, with the exception of Judea, prior to the incarnation of Christ, may be inferred from his declaration when the seventy disciples returned from their mission, and related their success, "I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven." He anticipated the result of the preaching of the gospel, which would effect the overthrow of all the false religions of mankind; and by representing this event as the fall of Satan, he intimated that he patronized them, and by their means, upheld the interests of his kingdom. "We wrestle not," says an Apostle, "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."† He may be understood to speak of the conflict which is going on in all ages, between fallen angels and the followers of Christ; but he refers, I presume, in a particular manner, to the contest in which the Apostles were engaged with them, while the former attacked, and the latter defended the various systems of error and corruption, by which the knowledge, and worship, and laws of God had been almost banished from the earth. The powers of darkness did not assume a visible form, and wage open war with the servants of Christ; but they influenced the minds of their own votaries, and excited a vigorous resistance by all the arts and all the force of which they were possessed. During the reign of heathenism, Satan was emphatically the god of this world, over which he ruled with uncontrolled dominion. Princes, priests, the common people, and philosophers, were his subjects; for all had departed from the true God, and wandered in the mazes of error and vice. It is a curious question, whether evil spirits had any concern in the heathen oracles; and while some affirm, others deny. It would be absurd to suppose, that they could predict future events, of which the causes were not then in existence, and which depended upon the volitions of free agents; for, of such future things they are as ignorant as man, and

* Dæmoniacs. † To have a dæmon.
‡ Campbell on the Gospels. Preliminary Dissert. vi.
‖ 1 John iii. 8.

* Macknight's Harmony. Essay on the Demoniacs.
† Eph. vi. 12.

it is the prerogative of God to declare the end from the beginning. Some future things, however, men may foretell, because they are in a train to be accomplished, and the sagacity of spirits is greatly superior to ours. If it could be proved that the heathen oracles ever revealed any thing secret, any thing which was done at a distance, any thing which the priests could not have known by natural means, we should be under the necessity of admitting supernatural agency. But their responses were commonly obscure, ambiguous, clogged with conditions, on the failure of any of which the credit of the oracle was saved, although the event did not take place; and in general, there is reason to believe, that they were managed by the dexterity of the priests. In whatever manner we decide this question, there can be no doubt that the monstrous fabric of paganism was upheld by the artifice of Satan and his ministers. Its overthrow is described in the Revelation by a war between Michael and his angels, and the dragon and his angels, and the expulsion of the latter from heaven.

There is the same authority for affirming that he was active in the great apostasy from the truth, which prevailed over Europe in the dark ages, and still subsists in many of its kingdoms. When the devil is cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, it is with a design that he should no more deceive the nations;* from which it appears that it was he who formerly deceived them. It is the old dragon, the old serpent, who gives to the beast "his power, and his seat, and great authority;"† and the coming of the man of sin is said to be "after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness;"‡ that is, the man of sin came in the same manner as Satan came when he seduced the nations into heathen idolatry; and he acts in concurrence with him, and by his assistance. If heathenism was his offspring, he may justly be considered as the father of popery, which is paganism revived, and, with the change of some of its tenets, and the substitution of new names for the old, retains its idolatry and its ritual observances. The signs, and powers, and lying wonders by which it is supported, are not real miracles, (for if evil spirits could perform these, they would be no criterion of a divine commission,) but appearances of miracles effected by superior knowledge of nature, by sleight of hand, and by other contrivances; which, however, may be said to be after the working of Satan, because by such arts, he had deceived men in former ages, and they are arts which no man could use but by his instigation. Whether evil spirits ever interposed any farther for the maintenance of the antichristian system, I pretend not to say; but, if all the stories in their legends are true, it cannot be doubted that they have. One thing, however, is certain, that such of the miracles as have been subjected to examination, have been discovered to be tricks of worthless monks and saints, to impose upon an ignorant credulous people.

In ancient times, the heathens were addicted to magic, and the profane science obtained credit among the Jews, who pretended that they had been taught it by Solomon. It was founded on a supposed intercourse with demons, by whose aid men were enabled to perform many wonderful works. But there is every reason to think, that there was nothing real in it, and that the whole was a system of delusion and imposture. In more modern times, a similar art has been known by the name of witchcraft, which avowedly consists in a correspondence with wicked spirits. The dealers in this art were supposed to have entered into a compact with the devil, by which they engaged to be his servants, on condition that he should invest them with preternatural power, of the effects of which marvellous stories are current among the vulgar. Their ideas seem to receive countenance from the Scripture, which makes mention, at least in our translation, of wizards and witches, and dealers in familiar spirits. But, besides that it is difficult to ascertain the precise import of the original terms, it is uncertain whether the persons were really possessed of the art which they professed, or were only pretenders to it. The story of the Witch of Endor favours the former supposition; but there are some circumstances, which will lead an attentive reader to suspect, that she exceeded her art on the occasion referred to, and that the effect was beyond her expectation. Whatever may be determined with respect to those of former times, the more recent tales of wizards and witches are rendered improbable by this circumstance, that, in proportion as knowledge has advanced, such characters have disappeared, and that their existence is now credited only by the most illiterate. There is therefore ground of suspicion, that their whole history may be traced to the ignorance of the ages in which they flourished.

Nothing is more plainly taught in the Scriptures, than that evil spirits are employed in tempting men to sin. The devil is called "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience;"* the wicked are said to be "of their father the devil,"† and to do his works; and it is affirmed that "he who committeth sin is of the devil."‡ It was Satan who tempted Judas to betray his Master,‖ and put it into the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to agree together to lie to the Holy Ghost.§ His efforts are, in a particular manner, directed against the saints, who are the objects of his envy and hatred, because they have been restored to the favour of God, and are engaged in his service. Our Lord told his disciples, that Satan had desired to have them, that he might sift them as wheat;¶ and an Apostle says in the name of all his brethren, "We are not ignorant of his devices."** With respect to both saints and sinners, he is represented as "a roaring lion, going about, and seeking whom he may devour."††

These, and many other passages, fully prove that fallen angels are employed in endeavouring to draw men into sin, and justify us in believing their agency, although we cannot explain it. It would be endless to attempt to give a particular account of their temptations, which are greatly diversified, and adapted, we may presume, with consummate art, to the varieties in the tempers and circumstances of individuals. They solicit men to pride, to profaneness, to avarice, to sensuality, to malignity; to every evil, in a word, which will dishonour God, and bring ruin upon their souls.

There are two extremes, which, when speaking upon this subject, we should be cautious to avoid. Some seem to ascribe so much influence to Satan, as to represent the human heart as a mere passive instrument in his hand, and trace to him all its wickedness, as if, without his instigation, it would have adopted no errors, and committed no crimes. To him the blame of all its vices and extravagancies is transferred by a sweeping sentence. Others exclude him from having any concern in the depravity of human nature, and find, in man himself, the origin of all the corruptions in principle and practice, which have prevailed on the earth. The Scriptures adopt a middle course; and while they speak, in the strongest terms, of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, they affirm, that its appetites and passions are excited, and drawn forth into action, by an invisible Tempter. When the Prince of this world came to our Saviour, he failed in his design, because he found nothing in him, who was perfectly pure; but, when he comes to us, he finds materials upon which he operates with success.

* Rev. xx. 7, 8. † Ib. xiii. 2. ‡ 2 Thess. ii. 9. 10.

* Eph. ii. 2. † John viii. 44. ‡ 1 John iii. 4.
‖ John xiii. 2. § Acts v. 3. ¶ Luke xxii. 31.
** 2 Cor. ii. 11. †† 1 Pet. v. 8.

Hence it appears, that men are in continual danger, and that it assails them from a quarter of which many entertain no suspicion. Christians alone are apprised of it by divine admonitions, and feel the necessity of vigilance, and prayer, and exertion. They are not left to struggle with their active and powerful adversaries; but, while heavenly grace is ready to assist them, they are amply provided with the means of defence, and earnestly exhorted to them. "Put on," therefore, "the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."*

LECTURE XL.

MAN IN HIS STATE OF INNOCENCE.

Mosaic Account of the Creation of Man—Pattern after which he was made; the image of God—His resemblance to it in the Spirituality of his Soul; the Authority with which he was invested; his Knowledge; and his original Righteousness—Happiness of Man's Primeval State—Its Duration.

When the earth was prepared by the hand of the Almighty, adorned with its sublime and beautiful scenery, and enriched by his liberality, man was introduced into it as his dwelling, and placed at the head of its other inhabitants. In vain, as we have already remarked, should God have displayed the wonders of his power and wisdom, if no being had been raised up to contemplate them, and to offer up the just tribute of praise. All his works glorify him; but they do so, by manifesting his excellencies to intelligent creatures, who are capable of perceiving the tokens of his presence, and of feeling the devout impressions which these are fitted to make. A world which was a mere solitude, or was inhabited only by animals possessed of no higher powers than instincts and the external senses, would have existed to no purpose worthy of its Maker; and the art displayed in the arrangement of its parts would have seemed to be a waste of skill. But it appears to be a work worthy of its Author, when we find it peopled by a race of a higher order, who see him in the objects which surround them, and are led by the gifts of his bounty to love and adore the Giver. Heaven is his throne; "but the earth hath he given to the children of men."†

The creation of man took place on the sixth day, and was delayed till that time, that the earth might be prepared for his reception. Having made "the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth, after his kind," God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them."‡ It is thus that Moses relates the origin of the human race.

There are two things in these words which deserve particular attention. There is an unusual solemnity observed at the creation of man. While, on the other days, nothing is heard but the simple and majestic command, which is instantly obeyed, "Let there be light," "Let the waters under heaven be gathered together unto one place," "Let the earth bring forth grass;" on this occasion there is something like what we call deliberation and consultation; a sort of preparation for the work, as if it were of superior importance. This surely may be inferred from the peculiarity of the form, that the creature about to be made, was of a nobler species than the other inhabitants of the earth, and destined to a higher purpose. God was now to crown his lower works, by bringing forward the last and the best of them. The earth being fashioned and furnished, only one thing remained to complete his design; and he therefore said, Let us now make man. —The other thing remarkable, is the use of the plural instead of the singular pronoun. God said not, "Let *me* make man," but "Let *us* make man after our image." Different methods have been adopted to account for this unusual mode of expression. He spoke, say the Jews, to the earth, to the heavens, to the elements. I presume that these are words without meaning; and simply to state this opinion, is to refute it. When we are informed what is meant by God's speaking to the elements, or summoning them to join with him in the creation of man, and how man was made after their image, that is, when nonsense is proved to be sense, the opinion will deserve to be considered. Others say that he spoke to the angels; but, as he said, "Let us make man," it follows, upon this supposition, that he called upon them to co-operate with him in the production of his noblest work. Is not this opinion as unintelligible as the former? Did God need the assistance of angels? And what assistance could they give him? The Scripture declares that we have all one Father, and that one God created us;* but now it seems that this information is not correct, and that we have many Creators, the angels having been concerned as well as he, to whom alone we supposed ourselves to be indebted for existence. This fancy being evidently absurd, others have maintained, that God spake in the style which is used by kings; who, although individuals, employ the plural number for greater dignity, or because they are the representatives of the people over whom they reign. But it ought to be considered that this style was altogether unknown in ancient times, and is of modern date; and, consequently, that there would have been an obvious impropriety in using it more than five thousand years prior to its introduction. It would have been misunderstood; it would have been supposed to import that there were more beings, more gods than one, concerned in the creation; and thus, merely for the sake of anticipating a mode of expression which had nothing to recommend it, an occasion would have been presented of leading mankind into the fundamental error of polytheism. The mode of expression, I say, had nothing to recommend it. When strictly examined, it is inaccurate, and cannot be excused on the plea of dignity or majesty, because the singular form is evidently more dignified, as it represents the authority of a sovereign, as concentrated in his single person, and not shared by any other individual upon earth. The most natural and satisfactory account of the use of a plural word, on this occasion, is to suppose a reference to a plurality of persons in the Godhead; which some conceive to be implied in the plural name of God, Elohim, and which is manifestly signified in several other passages of the Old Testament, that were quoted when I was illustrating the doctrine of the Trinity. With this doctrine the

* Eph. vi. 11—18. † Psalm cxv. 16. ‡ Gen. i. 26, 27.

* Mal. ii. 10.

people of God, under the ancient economy, were acquainted; and the language under consideration was not calculated to mislead them. They knew that God, on this occasion, consulted with himself; and inferred from his words, that all the Divine Persons were concerned in the creation of man.

The body of man was made of the dust, or of the earth, and hence the name Adam seems to be derived. The reason for forming it of such mean materials, seems to have been to teach him humility, when, amidst the honours which were to be conferred upon him, as Lord of the inferior creatures, he should reflect that, in one respect, he had the same origin with the beasts of the field. It was calculated also to awaken sentiments of devotion, while he contemplated in his own body an admirable proof of the wisdom and goodness of God who had constructed a frame of such curious workmanship, out of the dust which our first parent was daily treading under his feet. "I will praise thee," says the Psalmist, "for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."* No description can do full justice to its wonderful mechanism; and whether we consider the form and articulation of the bones, or the muscles by which they are moved, or the nerves which convey feeling and activity to every part, or the circulation of the blood, or the various organs of secretion and digestion, or the action of the lungs, or the senses by which it communicates with the external world, or its external symmetry and features, we pronounce it to be, in every respect, worthy of its divine Author, and fitted to serve the various purposes of the sentient and intelligent being to whom it belongs. I remark, in passing, that it is only in a secondary sense that the body of man is said to have been created. It was not made of nothing, but pre-existing matter; but equal power was necessary to produce, out of that matter, flesh, and blood, and bones.

When the body of man was fashioned, "The Lord God," says the sacred historian, "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."† The language is figurative; for breathing cannot be literally ascribed to God, who is not a corporeal being. The words import at least, that God caused the air to enter into his body, that its several parts might begin their functions, the lungs to respire, the heart to beat, and the blood to circulate. But, although this process may be considered as mechanical, we know that it cannot be carried on merely by mechanical causes. If a body be dead, the introduction of air into the lungs will not set them and the other parts of the system in motion. A living principle is wanted, distinct from the body, upon which its operations depend, as the motion of a machine constructed by human skill is caused by something different from the machine, as water or steam, or wind. Hence, although we may not be able to prove, that breathing into man the breath of life necessarily implies the communication of this principle, yet the case requires us to understand the words in this sense, especially as the effect is said to have been, that man became a living soul. As we know that the nature of man is compound, consisting of a soul as well as of a body, and no mention is made of the former in any other part of the narrative, we may reasonably conclude that Moses, who certainly would not omit a particular of so much importance, here refers to its creation. The body which was made of dust, is plainly distinguished from the soul, when the wise man informs us, that at death, "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."‡ The living soul of man was created, in the proper sense of the term. It is not a quality, but a substance; and as it did not previously exist, it must have been produced out of nothing by the Father of Spirits.

These two constituent parts of human nature were joined together by an invisible and mysterious tie. Although they possess no quality in common, and it might seem, therefore, that they could no more operate upon each other than if they were separated by an interval as wide as the space between heaven and earth, yet, by the will of God, which is the cause of all relations and connexions between created things, the soul moves the body, and the body affects the soul by its organs of sense, and all its modifications. Thus united, they constitute one individual, as really as if the essence of man, like that of the angels, had been perfectly simple. We cannot explain the fact, but we are all assured of it by experience.

When Adam had been created, there was not found "a help meet for him."* Among all the living inhabitants of the earth, there was not one who resembled him in shape or in mental endowments; there was not one who was fit to be his associate. Surrounded with creatures of different species he was placed in a solitude, affording no scope for the exercise of his distinguishing faculties, no means of intellectual intercourse, no objects to awaken the tender sensibilities of the heart. To supply this want, "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man."† Upon this narrative it would be useless to attempt a commentary, as we are altogether incapable of advancing a single additional idea to illustrate it. God seems to have chosen this mode of making the woman, instead of forming her also out of the dust, to constitute the closest conjunction between her and Adam, who was destined to be her husband; to be an image of the intimacy of the conjugal relation; and further, to derive the whole human race from one common stock, or to make them all literally of one blood. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh."‡ This simple fact, like many other passages of Scripture, has been made the foundation of allegory. Adam sleeping, is a type of Jesus Christ dead upon the cross, and Eve is a figure of the Church, which is consecrated and purified by the blood and water which flowed from his wounded side. But such interpretations of Scripture are fanciful, and although they may please for a moment, will not bear the examination of sober judgement. We have no authority for them but that of their authors, and shall do well not to indulge in them.

Let us proceed to consider the declaration of Scripture, that man was made in the image, and after the likeness of God. I shall not stop to enquire, what is the distinction between image and likeness, or whether there be any difference of meaning; the important truth which we are evidently taught is, that man was so formed, as to bear a resemblance to his Creator. It is almost unnecessary to remark, that it did not consist in his external form, because God having no bodily parts, any configuration of matter could not constitute the impress of his image. When Solomon says, that "God made man upright,"‖ he does not refer to his erect posture—the *os sublime*§ of the poet—but to the state of his mind.

First, The image of God may be conceived to consist in the essence of the human soul, which is spiritual like the Divine essence. God created matter, but it was not made after his image, because he is not him-

* Psalm cxxxix. 14. † Gen. ii. 7. ‡ Eccl. xii. 7.

* Gen. ii. 20. † Ib. 21, 22. ‡ Ib. 23, 24.
‖ Eccl. vii. 29. § Lofty countenance.

self material. But the soul resembles him, because it is uncompounded, indivisible, immortal, capable of thought and activity. The opinions respecting the nature of the soul have been various. Some have supposed that it was fire; some, that it was air; some, that it was a material substance highly refined; and some have denied that there is any soul at all, and have affirmed that sensation and thought are the effects of corporeal organization. But certainly the known properties of matter are the most remote that we can conceive from intelligence; and in the most refined states in which it is found to exist, as in the solar light, or the electric and magnetic fluids, it approaches no nearer to thinking and willing, than in its rudest and dullest form. No man can conceive perception to result from the mere arrangement or the motion of particles of matter, because these things are *toto cœlo* different, and have no more connexion with thought than colour has, or sweetness, or sound. But it would be superfluous to attempt to prove the immateriality of the soul by a process of reasoning. To christians the point admits of no doubt, since revelation has decided the question, and pronounced the soul to be a spiritual substance, so independent upon the body, that, when the latter dies, it shall survive in a state of consciousness and activity. In the invisible and nobler part of his nature, man resembles his Maker, who is a Spirit.

Secondly, The image of God in which Adam was made, consisted in the authority with which he was invested. "Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."* This dominion implied that all things were placed in a state of subjection to man, and were subservient to him. It has been questioned whether he had a right to make use of the lower animals for food; some supposing that this right was not given till after the flood, when it is first expressly mentioned. Without entering into this controversy, it may suffice to observe, that man was constituted the lord of this lower world; that all the creatures were inspired with respect for him, and submitted to his government; and that he was at liberty to employ them for such ends, as an innocent being could desire to accomplish. He might be said to have been created in the image of God, because he was his representative and vicegerent.

I proceed to observe, in the third place, That the image of God principally and properly consisted in the qualities of his soul, which were similar to the perfections of his Maker. The words of Moses which we are considering, as illustrated by those of an Apostle, who addressing christians on the subject of their restoration to the state from which Adam fell, says, "Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him;"† and again, "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."‡ From these passages we learn, that the image of God, in which Adam was created, consisted, not merely in intellectual endowments, but also in holy dispositions. As a mirror reflects the brightness of the sun, so did his soul exhibit a counterpart of the moral attributes of God, according to its limited capacity. He who made all other creatures perfect in their kind, did not withhold from man what constitutes the chief excellence, the noblest ornament of his nature. It was as impossible that he should have come from the hands of his Maker with a mind labouring under ignorance, or a heart tainted with impurity, as that darkness should proceed from light, or evil from good.

The understanding of man, in his primeval state, was illuminated with all necessary knowledge. In speaking upon this subject, there are two extremes which should be avoided. Some reduce the knowledge of the first man almost to nothing, represent him as a child in understanding, although his body was in the maturity of manhood, and maintain that he was left to acquire wisdom by degrees, in the exercise of his faculties upon the objects around him, and under the tuition of experience. But this opinion supposes him to have been less perfect than the lower animals, who were no doubt endowed at once with all their peculiar instincts in perfection; is at variance with the Scripture, which affirms that he was created in the image of God, of which, according to an Apostle, knowledge was a constituent part; and places him in a situation in which he could not, for some time at least, fulfil the design of his creation, and must have been unavoidably exposed to the danger of error. Is it not more rational to believe, that all the knowledge, which was necessary in his circumstances, was at once infused into his mind? Others give an extravagant account of his knowledge, as if it had almost equalled that of angels, and our first parent had been acquainted with all the arts and sciences which have been slowly acquired by his posterity. The truth lies between these extremes. He was neither so ignorant as the former affirm, nor so enlightened as the latter would persuade us. It is enough to maintain, that he possessed all the knowledge that was necessary to him as an intelligent and moral agent. We may presume that his faculties were stronger and more active than those of any of his children; and it may be inferred, from his naming the inferior creatures when they passed in review before him, that his acquaintance with natural objects was extensive and accurate. But the knowledge which chiefly distinguished him in his original state, and was an essential part of the divine image, was the knowledge of God and his will, of every thing which it behoved him to know, in order to fulfil the end of his creation. He knew himself; he knew his relations to his Maker; he knew the duty which he owed to him; he knew what he had to fear from sin, and what to hope from obedience. This knowledge was not obtained by observation, and inquiry, and reflection, but by immediate inspiration; it was a light from heaven, which shone into his mind from the first moment of his existence. It may be justly called perfect knowledge, because it was distinct, accurate, and full. Man was not ignorant of any thing in which he was concerned; he was not mistaken in any of his notions; he did not, in a single instance, suppose good to be evil, or evil to be good; and as he was sensible of his dependence upon the Author of his being, and looked to him as his guide, so God was always ready to grant to him such new discoveries as might be conducive to his happiness. More knowledge he might have acquired, and would have acquired, by natural means or supernatural revelation, if he had continued in innocence; but his present knowledge was sufficient for his present condition. This is the only perfection in knowledge of which a creature is capable, either upon earth or in heaven. Knowledge absolutely perfect is omniscience, which is an incommunicable attribute of the Creator.

It has been a subject of inquiry, whether our first parents were endowed at once with the knowledge of language, or were left to form a language for themselves. Those who maintain the latter opinion, are compelled to admit that they understood the words in which they were addressed by God, and afterwards by the serpent; but they conceive that the other words in their vocabulary were of their own invention. To state this hypothesis, is to expose it as whimsical and ridiculous. If God inspired them with the knowledge of some words, what good reason can be assigned for supposing that he stopped here, and did not go on to finish what he had begun? Is there any advantage gained by the supposition? Is

* Gen. i. 26. † Col. iii. 10. ‡ Eph. iv. 23.

there a single hint to favour it in the narrative of Moses? Is it more rational than the other opinion, or more analogous to other parts of the Divine procedure? It is a mere conjecture, and a conjecture so manifestly arbitrary, that it deserves rather to be laughed at than seriously refuted. For a time, our first parents must have been mute, except that they could repeat the few words in which God had instructed them; for a time, they must have been incapable of celebrating the praises of their Maker, and of carrying on intercourse between themselves, but by signs, like the speechless savages, who never existed except in the brains and writings of dreaming philosophers. Can we allow ourselves to think that man, the chief of God's works, was brought upon the stage in a state so imperfect? No; we believe that he, who infused knowledge into his mind, taught him how to express it in articulate sounds.

I proceed to observe, that another feature of the Divine image consisted in the rectitude of his will, by which I mean, that he was fully disposed to the performance of his duty, or to act according to the light which shone in his mind. As he was a moral agent, we must hold that his will was free; and that it was so, is manifest from the event, for he did turn aside from the path of duty, and make a choice which proved fatal to himself and his posterity. "God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions."* By freedom of will, however, I do not mean that his mind was in a state of suspense, or of indifference to good and evil. I believe such a state to be impossible, unless it be preceded by complete ignorance of both; and, if possible, to be criminal, because our knowledge of what is right and good should immediately determine the choice. His mind was not *in equilibrio*, like a balance, the scales of which are pressed down by equal weights; he was averse to evil, and inclined only to good; but he might reject the good, and choose the evil. He was not confirmed in purity, as angels and glorified saints are; he was a mutable creature, and might change by an act of volition, and in this consisted his freedom of will. The rectitude of his will is implied in the uprightness which is predicated of him in his original state. His will was in unison with the will of God. He had no desires or inclinations of his own which he was disposed to gratify; his pleasure arose from doing what was pleasing to his Maker. This seems to be that righteousness which the Scriptures affirm to be an essential part of the image of God, and which, at the same time, they distinguish from knowledge and holiness, meaning, probably, by the latter, the pure thoughts, and affections, and actions, which resulted from it. The state of man in innocence may be illustrated by contrasting it with that of his descendants, in whom there is found an opposition between their convictions of duty and their inclinations. This internal conflict, this rebellion of the will against reason or conscience, was observed and lamented by the Heathens; and every scholar knows the confession or complaint of the poet, that he perceived and approved what was right, but pursued what was wrong:

"Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor."†

The Apostle Paul shews, from his own experience, that this conflict takes place even in the regenerated, in consequence of the remains of depravity. "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members."‡ Hence it is that virtue, although eloquently recommended, and praised in rapturous strains, is often in practice totally disregarded. Notions floating in the head, and, it may be, slightly affecting the conscience, are too feeble to subdue the strong and inveterate aversion of the heart. In the soul of the first man, the most perfect order reigned. His knowledge was not speculative, but practical. His will obeyed the dictates of his enlightened understanding. His perceptions of duty were accompanied with perfect submission to the authority by which it was enjoined. What the first Adam was, we may learn by contemplating the Second, all whose powers harmonized in the service of God, and who accounted it his meat and his drink to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work.

Some have affirmed that man did not at first possess this righteousness, but that it was afterwards infused into him. He was innocent, they say, or free from sin, when he was created, but was not positively holy. As, in this state, a conflict might have taken place between the inferior and the superior part of his nature, between appetite and reason, righteousness was superadded to check and restrain every disorderly movement. An obvious consequence of this opinion is, that the loss of this righteousness has only placed him in his original circumstances; and that we come into the world just such creatures as Adam was, having as much liberty of will to choose good, and refuse evil, and equally capable of acquiring virtuous habits. It is true that he was subsequently placed in a more advantageous situation, when he was endowed with supernatural gifts; but, wanting these, we are on the same footing on which he stood when he came from the hands of his Maker. It is obvious that this opinion overthrows the Scriptural doctrine of original sin. In opposition to it, we maintain that, although man may be conceived as being without righteousness, yet, in point of fact, Adam never wanted it; that from the beginning, it was an endowment of his nature; that he was holy as soon as he became a living soul; and we found our assertion upon the declaration of Scripture, that God created man in his own image. He did not stamp his image upon him after he was made, but it was the pattern according to which he fashioned him at first.

To illustrate further the subject of original righteousness, I observe that, at his creation, the will of man was holy and only inclined to good. Had there been any bias of his nature to evil, any tendency to it, however faint, any appetite or passion which was not completely under the government of reason, or rather of the Divine law, he would not have been upright in the full and perfect sense of the word. What we now assert, is opposed to the opinion already stated, that there was a conflict between appetite and reason in man, that he was subject to concupiscence or desire excited by the objects around him, which it might be necessary in some cases to resist. Our appetites and passions, it is said, are not in our power, and do not wait for our permission, but are often moved before we are aware. Now, the constitution of Adam being the same with ours, he must have occasionally felt desires which could not have been gratified with innocence, but which, being involuntary, would not be imputed to him as sin. In a word, it is maintained, that there was from the beginning a struggle in the human breast, similar to that which takes place in the regenerated, according to the description of an inspired writer, "that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other."* This may pass with some men as conclusive reasoning; but it is much of the same kind as if we should say, a man infirm and diseased is never free from pain;

* Eccl. vii. 29.

† The better things I see and approbate,
The worse—I follow.

‡ Rom. vii. 23.

* Gal. v. 17.

and, therefore, a man of a sound constitution, and in good health, is never perfectly at ease. The primeval state of man was so different from his present state, that it would be downright folly to argue from the one to the other. There was then a harmony, a subordination among his faculties, which we can hardly conceive who have daily experience of their disorder. There was such light in his mind, and such love to God in his heart, as retained his appetites in a state of complete subjection. No wandering thoughts or irregular desires found admission into his holy soul. The dominion of the law of God over all the principles of his nature was absolute. It is the effect of the fall, that the connexion established between the intellectual and active powers of the soul is unsettled; that reason and conscience often dictate in vain, and the will rebels against both; that the affections rush headlong upon forbidden gratifications; and man, with all his knowledge, and all his resolutions to the contrary, is hurried away by their violence. But this is a description only of fallen man. In a state of innocence, his soul was like a curious machine, all the parts of which moved in harmony by the force of one master spring, the love of God, which actuated and sanctified all its powers.

It is true, then, that God made man upright, that he was a creature worthy of the Author of his being, the fair image of his excellencies, a mirror from which the unspotted purity of the divine nature was reflected.

Man, being holy, enjoyed all the felicity which was suitable to his nature and his circumstances. His body contained no seeds of disease, and was not subject to languor or pain. The objects around him, arrayed in the freshness of youth, and beautified by the hand of the Creator, were calculated to delight his senses. Work was prescribed to him; but it was of the easiest kind, and served merely as an agreeable recreation. He was placed in the garden of Eden, where nature appeared in all her loveliness; a garden which God himself had planted, and in which grew "every tree which was pleasant to the sight, and good for food." I shall not stop to inquire in what region it was situated, although many learned men have amused themselves with the inquiry. Some hints are given in the history of Moses; but they are too general to enable us to come to a certain conclusion. In the midst of abundance man experienced no present want, and felt no anxiety respecting the future; for unconscious of guilt, he looked up with confident expectation to the goodness of his Maker. And this leads me to remark, that it was not from external objects that his happiness was chiefly derived, but from the intimate fellowship with his Creator to which he was admitted. He rejoiced in his glory, which his enlightened eye contemplated in the splendour of the heavens, and the varied scenery of the earth: he rejoiced in a sense of his favour, in a feeling of his love; and assured of his friendship, he reposed without suspicion upon his wisdom and benevolence. All was calm within, and all was peaceful without. He was happy now; and he should be happy always, if he continued to perform the easy service which was enjoined upon him. Easy it may be justly called, for it consisted in yielding to the bent of his own will, which was inclined only to good, and exercising the holy faculties with which he was endowed. Obedience was natural to him; and what is conformable to nature is attended with pleasure. How delightful must have been his emotions, while he was employed in admiring, and loving, and praising, and executing the orders of that Being who had lately called him into existence, and showered innumerable blessings upon him! The life which he led in Paradise was like the life of angels.

The Scriptures have not informed us how long our first parents retained their innocence, and enjoyed the delights of their primeval state. There is room, therefore, for conjecture; and in this, as in other cases, there have not been wanting theologians, who have filled up the void with the suggestions of fancy. Some have thought, that they fell on the same day on which they were created, and have even appealed to the authority of Scripture. "Man being in honour abideth not," says the Psalmist, "he is like the beasts that perish."* Now, the word translated *to abide*, signifies *to continue for a night*. Hence these profound critics, presuming that there is an allusion to the first man, boldly conclude that he did not continue for a night in the honour of his original state; and some of them have supported the conclusion by arguments of the most ridiculous nature. It is quite sufficient to remark, that the view which they have taken of the verse is perfectly unnatural, and would have occurred only to an interpreter who was in search of proofs to support a favourite opinion. It contains obviously a general reflection upon the transitory nature of fallen man, and the instability of his enjoyments. His wealth and glory vanish like a vapour; and he himself, after a short interval, returns to the dust from which he came. We have no reason to think that the period of human innocence was of long duration; but we have also no reason to believe that it lasted only for a few hours. Was there not one day of purity and peace? Was the work of the Almighty marred as soon as it was finished? The narrative of Moses seems to be inconsistent with this supposition. The business of the sixth day was so various as to occupy, we should think, the whole of it. First, quadrupeds and reptiles were created; next Adam was made; then the command was given respecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; afterwards the various animals passed before him, and he gave them names; again he was cast into a deep sleep, and Eve was formed of a rib taken from his side; last of all, the woman was brought to him, and they were joined together by God himself in the conjugal relation. This was the busiest day of the six, but it were still more crowded with events, if the fall took place upon it; for then we must suppose that Adam and Eve, who had so lately met, separated almost immediately, although for what reason it is impossible to conceive; that Eve had a conversation with the serpent, by whom she was persuaded to eat the forbidden fruit; that she then went in search of her husband, and prevailed upon him to imitate her example; that they then discovered themselves to be naked, and clothed themselves with fig-leaves; and that all this happened before the cool of the day, probably the afternoon, when the sun was declining, and the air was refreshed by a gentle breeze. We must add to these transactions the procedure of God as a judge towards them and their tempter, and their expulsion from Paradise. This simple detail of facts is sufficient to shew, that the opinion under consideration is destitute of the slightest probability: but I go a step farther, and say that it is manifestly false; for at the end of the sixth day God saw all his work that it was good. But how could this be, if sin had introduced misery and death into our world; if man had become a rebel, and a curse had been pronounced upon him, and upon the earth for his sake? It is evident from the narrative of Moses, that the temptation and fall of man were subsequent to the seventh day, on which God rested from all his work which he had made.

God pronounced his work to be good, because sin had not entered to mar its beauty, and disturb its order. The heavens were resplendent with the glory of their Maker, and the earth was full of his praise. The trees and herbs of the field displayed his wisdom and goodness; the inferior animals were perfect in their kind; and

* Psalm xlix. 12.

man, placed at their head, was enlightened by reason, and adorned with every moral excellence. There never was so lovely a sight as our world bearing the recent impress of the hand which fashioned it. The memory of its original state, conveyed down by tradition, suggested to the heathen poets their descriptions of the golden age, when the earth spontaneously yielded its fruits, the manners of its inhabitants were simple and virtuous, and life flowed on smoothly in innocence and peace. The whole creation declared the glory of God; and man, as the priest of nature, gave a voice to its silent homage, and offered up to the Universal Parent, the pure sacrifices of adoration and thanksgiving.

LECTURE XLI.

ON PROVIDENCE.

Doctrine of Providence—A Providence inferred from the acknowledged Perfections of God; from the dependent nature of Creatures; from the Order maintained in the Universe; from the existence of Moral Sentiments; and from various Facts in the History of our Race—Particular Providence.

WHATEVER elevated conceptions the wiser and more contemplative heathen philosophers might entertain of the Deity, they could not rise to that sublime view of him which is exhibited in revelation. They might conceive of him as One, Invisible, and Perfect; but not knowing him in the proper character of Creator, they could not feel all that reverence for him which his power in the production of the universe is calculated to inspire, nor those emotions of love and gratitude which are awakened by the display of his creative benevolence. Some of them, indeed, did speak of him, as the Artificer of all things; but it should be recollected that, according to their undisputed maxim of the impossibility of creation in the proper sense of the term, his office was limited to the arrangement of pre-existing materials; and that over matter, which was eternal as himself, he had not absolute control, but was under the necessity of executing his designs only so far as its nature would permit. How different is the God of Jews and Christians, who, subsisting alone from infinite ages, manifested himself in the beginning of time, by calling out of nothing that immense and glorious system, which fills the regions of space! Of the work of creation we have already spoken, and have illustrated the Mosaic account of it, and endeavoured to vindicate it from the objections of infidelity and of modern science, whether they seek to prove, that there is no vestige of a beginning, and no prospect of an end, or that its origin must be traced to a period far beyond the limits of history, and anterior by thousands or millions of years to the date assigned to it in the Scriptures.

We have seen that, at the command of the Almighty, the material system arose out of nothing; and by subsequent exertions of his power, under the direction of his wisdom, was arranged in that order which astonishes us by its magnificence, and delights us by its beauty. Whatever speculations we may indulge respecting the other parts of creation, which are too remote to be subjects of minute observation, we know that the earth was not intended to be a solitude. While the land, the sea, and the atmosphere, were filled with living creatures of various kinds, man was formed to be the spectator of the wonders with which he was surrounded, and to proclaim the glory of God, which they could only passively display. Distinguished from them all by his erect posture, and the gift of reason, he was still more highly elevated by his moral endowments, which being a transcript of the divine excellencies, properly constituted the image of God, with which he was adorned. But this state of things was of short duration. Sin finding admission even into paradise, the sacred seat of innocence and bliss, caused a sudden and melancholy change; and while man was divested of the glory of his nature, his offended Creator was provoked on his account to blast the earth with his curse; so that, though still lovely, it is but the faded image of what it once was, and the marks of heaven's anger may be traced in the ruggedness, and sterility, and unhealthiness of many parts of it, as well as in the turbulence and desolating fury of the elements. This revolution, which seemed to defeat the design of God in creation, could not have taken place without his knowledge, nor without his permission; for there is no doubt that, as he could have prevented our first parents from being tempted, so he could have enabled them to resist the strongest temptations. Mysterious as the subject is, we must believe that, although we cannot say that God willed sin, he willed not to hinder it, and that it was his purpose to overrule it for an end worthy of himself. It follows, that his Providence was concerned in the fall; although we may not be able to describe the nature and extent of its agency. Before, therefore, I proceed to a particular consideration of the fall and its consequences, I shall endeavour, in some lectures, to explain the doctrine of Providence.

It may be remarked at the commencement, that men have not been more generally agreed in the belief that there is a God, than in the persuasion that the universe is under the direction and control of superior power and wisdom. In this sentiment, I may say, all nations have concurred. It seems to be a natural deduction of reason from the idea of a Deity; and to be suggested to a reflecting mind by the appearances of nature, and the course of events. Certain philosophers, indeed, have denied that the affairs of mortals are under the Divine superintendence; and of these some have doubted or denied the existence of a God; while others, granting it in words, have with manifest inconsistency cut off all intercourse between him and his creatures, and shut him up, as it were, in the solitude of heaven. To this latter class belonged Epicurus, and his followers, who were Atheists in reality, although Theists in profession: *Re tollit*, says Cicero of Epicurus, *oratione relinquit, Deos.** The Divine nature, according to the Epicureans, as the philosopher Sallustius observes in his book *de Diis et Mundo*,† "is neither itself disturbed, nor does it give disturbance to others." The same opinion is ascribed to them in Cicero's first book *de Natura Deorum*:‡ "That which is happy and eternal gives no trouble either to itself or to others, and is susceptible neither of anger nor of favour, because whatever is subject to such emotions, is weak." Happiness, as they imagined, consisted in doing nothing, in being engaged in no occupation, in performing no work; and their God rejoiced in his own wisdom and virtue, and in the assurance of always enjoying the greatest delights. The God of other philosophers, whose task was to govern the world, maintain the courses of the stars, the changes of the seasons, the order and revolutions of the universe, to contemplate the lands and seas, support the life and supply the wants of men; this God appeared to them to be necessarily unhappy, because he was involved in irksome and laborious operations. Thus they denied a Providence, and by doing so, as the wiser heathens remarked, subverted the foundations of religion. "If God is such," says Cicero, "that he feels no good will or love towards men, away with him! for why should I say, Let him be propitious?

* De Nat. Deor. lib. i. He takes away the gods in reality; while, in words, he allows them to remain.

† Concerning the gods and the universe.

‡ Concerning the nature of the gods.

He can be propitious to no person, since as you say, favour and love are proofs of imbecility."‖

The word Providence, which we have derived from the Latin word *Providentia*, and the Greek word Προνοια, are used to express the action or conduct of God towards the universe, which he upholds by his power, and regulates by his wisdom. The question concerning Providence is whether, as there is a Creator, there is also a Ruler of the world; or whether, the heavens and earth are under the superintendence of him who brought them into existence. Providence, is the care which God takes of all things, to uphold them in being, and to direct them to the ends which he has determined to accomplish by them, so that nothing takes place in which he is not concerned in a manner worthy of his infinite perfections, and which is not in unison with the counsel of his will. More particularly we may observe, that two things are included in the notion of Providence; the preservation and the government of all things. Preservation immediately respects things themselves, which by his power are sustained, or continued in existence. Government respects their actions and motions, which by his almighty influence are disposed in a certain order, and are rendered subservient to certain ends. In particular, the objects of Providence, as exercised in this world, are men, whose proceedings, partaking as they do of a moral character, are in themselves of so much importance; and whose thoughts, and volitions, and operations, are the means by which the Supreme Ruler carries on his designs.

The first argument which I shall produce in proof of a Providence, is drawn from the acknowledged perfections of God. As these prove that he is qualified to undertake the management of his creatures, and all their affairs, so they furnish sure ground for the conclusion, that he has not, and will not, dismiss them from his care. Manifold as his works are, they are all under his eye, for omniscience is an attribute of his nature; and consequently, the minutest objects are as well known to him as the greatest, and the most secret actions as well as those which are performed in the light of the sun. And, although a finite understanding would be perplexed and burdened by the countless myriads of creatures, it costs him no labour to attend to them, for he surveys the immense field of creation at a glance. His power is adequate to all the purposes of his government, whether natural or moral, because it is as unlimited as his knowledge; and it can be exerted upon any object wherever it is situated, or upon ten thousand objects at the same moment, because his power, if I may speak so, is commensurate with his essence, and he is equally present in every part of the universe. He who called it into existence by his simple command, is able to uphold it by the word of his power. Of the sufficiency of his wisdom for the regulation of affairs, no doubt can be entertained, after what has been said of his knowledge. Knowledge furnishes the materials which wisdom arranges. And can he, to whom all the component parts of the universe are perfectly known, and who is intimately acquainted with their situations, their powers, and their uses, be at any loss to adjust them to one another, and to dispose them in such a manner as to accomplish those ends which will promote his glory, and the general good? I may ask again, would it have been worthy of his wisdom, to have created an immense system of material and immaterial beings, and then to have left it to itself? In this case, we could not conceive what purpose he had in view, or by what motive he was influenced in the production of it. Why did he fill the regions of space with innumerable worlds, and people them with various orders of inhabitants, and then withdraw his attention from them, or look on an unconcerned spectator of their movements and actions? But another argument may be drawn from his goodness, which was conspicuous in creation itself, but would seem to have been exhausted by this effort, if a Providence be denied. The benevolence which prompted the Deity to call the universe into existence, would surely prompt him to extend his protection to it. There could not be a higher impeachment of his character, than to suppose him to have abandoned his own works; to have deserted his rational offspring, and to have delivered them up as helpless orphans to chance, or to the blind operation of general laws; to the dubious guidance of their feeble reason, and to the arbitrary rule of their wayward passions. What a revolting idea do they give us of the First and Greatest of all beings, who would persuade us that he is indifferent to countless myriads of creatures, whom he himself formed with desires and a capacity for happiness, but who are now the sport of accident, and tossed up and down for no determinate end, like atoms in a sun-beam? How much more amiable and august is the Deity, whom reason and revelation exhibit as the Parent and Guardian of all that live, as caring for the meanest of them, and scattering his gifts among them with a munificent hand! Lastly, as justice is one of his perfections, it follows that he must exercise a moral government over his creatures. Their actions cannot be indifferent to him; nor can he permit them to go on without interfering to restrain or to encourage, to reward or to punish, in such a degree as is consistent with the present, which is not our final state; to defeat, in some instances, the purposes of the wicked; to prevent the full execution of them in others; and, in all, to overrule them so as to promote the ultimate end of his administration, the triumph and establishment of righteousness. The denial of a Providence, indeed, is so manifestly inconsistent with the belief that God is good and just, that the Epicureans, as we have seen, laid it down as an indisputable maxim, that the Divine nature is susceptible neither of favour nor of anger. There is no moral principle in that being who is not inclined to interpose, and does not actually interpose when he can, to patronize virtue, and to check the progress of vice.

A second argument in favour of Providence, is founded on the dependent nature of creatures. We affirm that they not only derived their being from God, but that it is solely by his power that they are sustained; and consequently, that the continued existence of the universe, and the motions which are going on in it, whether mechanical or voluntary, are proofs of a Providence. Nothing can be stronger, and more exclusive of the idea of independence on the part of creatures, than the following words of Scripture: "In him we live, and move, and have our being;"* and of the same import is the declaration of an Apostle, that our Saviour, who is God, "upholds all things by the word of his power."† The assertion of Divines, that the preservation of existence is a continual creation, is not merely a rhetorical figure, importing that the power of God is as truly admirable in preserving all things as in creating them, but is a literal statement of a fact. God alone exists by necessity of nature, or, in other words, has the ground of his existence in himself; the existence of all other beings is contingent. It is the result of an act of his will; and as it might not have been, so it may cease to be, there being nothing in the nature of things to ensure its continuance. Thus they touch upon nothing on all sides, upon the nothing which preceded, and the nothing which may follow. As the

‖ De Nat. Deor. lib. i.

* Acts xvii. 28. † Heb. i. 3.

ground of their existence is not in themselves, it is evident that they cannot, by their own will and power, prolong it for a single moment; and consequently, that it depends upon the will and power of God, as the flowing of the stream depends upon an uninterrupted supply of water from the fountain. They exist by the immediate concourse of his power, which prevents them from returning to nothing, from which they came, and to which they are always near; for, as the universe was created in a moment, in a moment it might be annihilated. The expression formerly quoted, that God upholds all things by the word of his power, is worthy of particular attention, and will enable us to form a just idea of the subject at present under consideration; for, as there is no need of a positive exertion to make a thing, which we bear up in our hand, fall to the ground, but it is sufficient to permit it to fall, by no longer supporting it, so, God has only (so to speak) to withdraw his hand, and the whole system of created things would instantly perish. It was his will which made, and it is his will which sustains them.—It is certain, and evident to reason, that any given moment in the succession of time does not depend upon any other moment; for time is not like a line composed of one continuous substance, but like a line formed by placing a number of separate parts one after another. Now all created beings exist in time, that is, their existence is measured by moments. If, then, one moment has an existence independent of that of another; if the first moment is independent of the second, the second of the third, and the third of those which succeed, it follows, that the existence of any created being in one moment does not necessarily imply its existence in another, or that, because it exists now, it must exist the next instant. Hence it appears that the operation of the same cause, to which its present existence is owing, is necessary to its future existence. In other words it is necessary that the power of God, which gave it being, should uphold it in every stage of its duration. As the same power which brought it out of nothing must be incessantly exerted to prevent it from returning to nothing, there is evidently ground for affirming that the upholding of all things is a continual creation. As, however, this term is commonly applied to their first production, the word preservation, or conservation, is more frequently used.

It has been objected against this view of the absolute dependence of all things upon God, that while it seems to honour him by giving an exalted idea of his power and dominion, it implies a reflection upon his wisdom, as if he had executed a work so imperfect, as to require his constant interference to prevent it from running into confusion and perishing. Even men can construct works which, when finished, have no farther need of their care. A house will stand although the builder should never see it again; and a watch, or clock, will point out the hour when it has passed out of the hands of the maker. But it should be considered that, in such cases, men merely give a particular form or arrangement to certain materials which were ready for their use; they neither make them, nor uphold them in being; and consequently, there is a wide difference between the office which they perform, and that which we assign to God, when we affirm that his interposition is necessary to preserve his creatures in existence. They merely put matter in a particular shape and order; but they could not retain it in that state for a single moment if it had a tendency to annihilation. The durability of their works plainly depends upon some other cause than their own power, because they continue after they have entirely abandoned them. With respect to those works which are intended to perform certain motions, and do perform them without the presence of the artists, as a watch or clock, or any other piece of machinery, let it be farther considered, that the process is not owing to men, in any other sense, than that they have made a proper disposition of the parts. It is the effect of the laws of nature, which experience has enabled them to apply to a particular purpose. The moving power is not in the machine itself, but in the elasticity of a spring, or the influence of gravitation, or the expansive force of the atmosphere. To represent, therefore, the works of God as being, on the supposition of the constant care of providence, more imperfect than the works of man, serves only to betray our ignorance. "The full answer to this objection," says Dr. Price, "is, that to every machine or perpetual movement for answering any particular purpose, there always belongs some *first mover*, some *weight* or *spring*, or other power, which is continually acting upon it, and from which all its motions are derived; nor without such a power is it possible to conceive of any such machine. The machine of the universe, then, like all besides analogous to it, of which we have any idea, must have a *first mover*.—It follows, therefore, that this objection is so far from being of any force, that it leads us to the very conclusion which it is brought to overthrow. The excellence of a machine by no means depends upon its going properly of *itself*, for this is impossible, but in the skill with which its various parts are adjusted to one another, and all its different effects are derived from the *constant action* of some *power*"* which is not in the machine.

A third argument in favour of providence, is founded on the order which is maintained in the universe. It is composed of many parts, endowed with different qualities, in some instances contrary to, and destructive of each other; but they are all retained in their proper places, and perform their peculiar functions; and a harmony is established among them, the result of which is the general good. In this immense and complicated machine, no part ever goes wrong; the motion is never suspended or embarrassed; its operations are carried on with such regularity, that they are the subject of calculation, and the same effects are constantly produced. The revolutions of the heavenly bodies are performed in their appointed times, notwithstanding the boundless regions which their orbits embrace; and although some of them go their rounds in eccentric paths, which cross those of other revolving bodies, they never meet, or drive one another from their course. No comet has ever rushed into the sun, or infringed upon a planet, or produced any other effect, than to excite the curiosity and astonishment of men of science, and to terrify the ignorant with direful forebodings of disastrous changes. The sun, the source of light and heat, although he has ministered to the system of which he is the centre, for thousands of years, has lost no portion of his splendour and his influence. It is only in the descriptions of poetry that he grows dim with years. The seasons succeed each other in the order which they have observed since the beginning of time; the earth retains its productive powers at the close of many generations, who have been supported by its produce; the sea continues within its ancient boundaries, and leaves the dry land to be the abode of terrestial animals. The various classes of animals and vegetables, notwithstanding the ravages of disease, of violence, and of inclement seasons, have propagated themselves; so that the earth is still stocked with inhabitants, and with ample provision for their wants. Shall we not infer that there is a superintending Deity by whom this order is maintained? If we saw a house in which every thing was found in its proper place, every office was regularly performed, and everything was provided which was wanted for the accommodation and comfort of the family; we should conclude that it was under the direction and

* Price's Dissertation on Providence, sect. ii.

command of a wise, active, and vigilant master. If we saw a state in which just and beneficial laws were established, every order of the citizens was secure in the possession of its peculiar privileges, all the arts of life were cultivated, and wealth and happiness abounded; we should immediately conclude that it enjoyed a regular government, and those, by whom it was administered, were worthy of their high office. These examples were brought forward by heathen writers, in support of the doctrine of Providence, and furnish an analogy from which it may be fairly deduced. When we contemplate this immense system, so wonderful in its contrivances, so constant in its movements, so admirably balanced, and proceeding from age to age without the slightest confusion; can it be imagined by any man in his senses, that there is no presiding mind by which it is governed? The evidence is still stronger to those who are more intimately acquainted with nature, and know that, in the motions of some of the heavenly bodies, there are occasional apparent irregularities, but that means are provided for correcting them, so that they return to their proper place.

It may be objected, that the order which prevails throughout the universe, may be accounted for by the laws of nature, without an immediate interposition of the Deity, and proves only the wisdom of its original constitution. But as, before we attempt to remove an objection, it is necessary to understand it, I ask, what is meant by the laws of nature? It is not enough to remind me of the law of gravitation, the laws of motion, the laws of light, and other laws mentioned by philosophers; because, after the most complete enumeration of them, the difficulty remains, what is the meaning of *a law*, in the present application of the term? I am disposed to think that, in using it, many impose upon themselves, as well as upon others. In its primary signification, it is a rule established and enforced by authority, and obviously implies intelligence and power; but, when it is tranferred to inanimate things, there is a change of the sense. It then signifies merely the stated, regular order in which they are found to subsist. Thus, finding that bodies near or on the surface of the earth tend towards its centre, and the planets belonging to our system tend towards the sun, we call this the law of gravitation; and in like manner, we speak of other laws by which matter is governed. But the truth is, that these are only facts, and are called laws solely on account of their uniformity. After all our observation and experience, we have merely discovered the fact, that bodies gravitate to a centre, and that the rays of light are subject to refraction and reflection; but we have not advanced a single step in explaining the phenomena of nature, or in shewing what is the true cause by which it is moved and sustained. Do we suppose that nature possesses intelligence, or activity, or power of any kind? Let us not confound ourselves by words, and forget that inertness, or a total incapacity of exertion, is an acknowledged property of matter. It is confessedly inactive. It can neither put itself in motion, nor stop itself when in motion; and every modification which it undergoes, is the effect of some external power. What then are laws of nature? They are the particular modes in which the Deity exerts his power, which, being uniform, are accounted natural, while any deviation from them is pronounced to be miraculous. If this be a just description of them, (and it is ignorance, or philosophy falsely so called, which gives any other,) it follows, that they are so far from accounting for the order which is maintained in the universe, that they necessarily imply the actual and constant interposition of the Creator, and as irresistibly suggest the idea of a Lawgiver, as do the laws of any human society. The truth is, that the laws of nature, if understood to be different from the operation of the Deity, are a name and nothing more, with which simpletons may be amused; but certainly no man of common sense, who is inquiring into the cause of the stability of the universe, will deem it satisfactory to be answered with a sound "The philosopher," says that great man, Maclaurin, "who overlooks the traces of an all-governing Deity in nature, contenting himself with the appearances of the material universe only, and the mechanical laws of motion, neglects what is most excellent; and prefers what is imperfect to what is supremely perfect, finitude to infinity, what is narrow and weak to what is unlimited and almighty, and what is perishing to what endures for ever." "Sir Isaac Newton," he adds, "thought it most unaccountable, to exclude the Deity *only* out of the universe. It appeared to him much more just and reasonable to suppose that the whole chain of causes, or the several series of them, should centre in him as their source; and the whole system appear depending on him, the only independent cause."*

A fourth argument in favour of Providence, arises from a variety of facts in the history of mankind. I take notice, in the first place, of those moral sentiments and feelings which exist in the mind of every human being, who has received any degree of cultivation. "The Gentiles, who have not the law," says an Apostle, "are a law to themselves, and shew the works of the law written in their hearts."† In whatever way men acquire notions of morality, there is a principle within them which distinguishes not only between truth and falsehood, but also between right and wrong; and hence arises that train of feelings, of which we are all conscious, and which are the sources of pleasure or pain, of peace or disquiet. Although the language is figurative, yet there is a manifest propriety in calling conscience the deputy or vicegerent of God in the soul. If it is natural to men, as we may infer from its universality, it was planted in the human breast by the hand of God; and its proper office is to remind us, not only of his existence, but of his government; to recognize him as presiding over our affairs, and taking notice of our actions; to re-echo his voice; to pronounce, in his name, a sentence of approbation or disapprobation; and to summon us to his tribunal, where the sentence will be ratified. If there were no Providence, conscience would be an illusive faculty; its decisions would have no better foundation than the hopes and terrors of superstition; but, if it be an original principle of our nature, it bears testimony to the moral administration of our Maker, and presupposes a supreme law, the commands and sanctions of which it proclaims and inculcates. There would be no place for the operations of conscience under such a deity as Epicurus fancied, who took no concern in our world, and regarded all its affairs with indifference.

While speaking of the moral sentiments and feelings with which mankind are inspired, I am led to point out another proof of the doctrine of Providence, arising from the fact, that we find, by experience, that we are actually at present under a government which dispenses rewards and punishments in a natural way. Thus we find that vicious actions are immediately, or at least speedily, punished, by involving the guilty in disgrace, by reducing them to poverty, by subjecting them to bodily diseases as well as to mental suffering, and by bringing them to an untimely end. On the other hand, we find that virtuous actions are not only the source of inward peace and satisfaction, but lead to respect, to success in business, to health and long life, to a more equable and regular, and consequently a greater degree of enjoyment than is derived from the unbounded, and consequently short-lived, indulgences of intemperance. All this, it may be said, is the consequence of the constitution and course of

* Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Discoveries, Book iv. chap. ix. sect. 1. and 5.

† Rom. ii. 14, 15.

nature; but, as these words mean nothing, unless they signify the order which God has established and upholds by his power, all this proves, that, as he is the Creator, so he is the Governor of his intelligent offspring.

The experience of individuals furnishes proofs of a Providence. Where is the man to whom events have not occurred which have led him irresistibly to acknowledge the hand of God? He has seen it in the wonderful turns in the course of his affairs, in his successes and disappointments, in his escapes from danger, in the sudden thoughts and unaccountable suggestions which have sometimes led to most important results. If he has been an attentive observer, he must have seen it also in the circumstances of others around him. It is displayed before the eyes of all men upon the great theatre of the world, where scenes are acted which extort, even from the thoughtless, occasional expressions of devotion. The rise of mighty kingdoms, from small beginnings to extensive and uncontrolled dominion, and their subsequent fall into decay and dissolution, may be accounted for by the operation of second causes, but are often accompanied with circumstances, which point to Him who lifts one up and casts another down. This is particularly the case of the revolutions of the great monarchies of ancient times, when viewed in connexion with the prophecies concerning them; for who can doubt that they were accomplished by Him who foretold them ages before they took place, and while those monarchies had not even been founded? And when we see order rising out of confusion, and disastrous events producing good, like the tempest which purifies the atmosphere, that man must have a dull understanding, or a hard heart, who feels no emotion of reverence and gratitude towards the great Being whose mysterious wisdom and unbounded beneficence presides over the affairs of mortals.

An additional proof of a providence is derived from the judgments which are occasionally executed upon notorious transgressors. There is, indeed, a danger of presumptuously explaining events, by hastily concluding, as did the friends of Job, that he is a great sinner who suffers singular calamities. A little sober reflection, and particularly a reverent attention to Scripture, will be an effectual guard against such an abuse. It is certain that, in general, "no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them;"* and consequently, that we ought not to be judge of the virtue or the vice of individuals by their external circumstances. But our caution must not be carried so far as to benumb our understandings. The fall of tyrants, the tragical fate of persecutors, the punishment of blasphemers while the language of impiety is issuing from their lips, the discovery of crimes which had long eluded the search of every human eye, the manifest retribution which takes place when the cup which the sinner had administered to others is forced to his own lips; these, and similar events, can be viewed by a reflecting mind in no other light than as evidences, that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth."† The Lord is known by the judgment which he executes."‡

Before I conclude, I shall mention two facts in the history of our species, which are well worthy of attention. The first is the proportion between the sexes, which are so well balanced, that, if there be any difference, it is on the side of the males; provision being thus made for the greater waste of them, by war, and the various accidents to which they are exposed by sea and by land. Here, then, is a double proof of Divine wisdom, in taking care, that the number of the two sexes should be nearly equal for the regular continuation of the species, and that the small excess, which has been observed, should be in that sex where it was manifestly wanted to keep up the proportion. No inquirer into nature can account for this fact. If any man should be so stupid as to assert, that the production of human beings is the effect of the mechanism of the bodies of their parents, he surely will not advance so far in absurdity as to maintain, that it is owing to mechanism that in one age or country they are not all born males, and in another females; and that whatever may take place in particular families, the result is always what we have already stated. It is im, possible to evade this evidence, that the affairs of the world are still under the direction of Him who made it.

The other fact to which I referred, is the variety in the human countenance. Its features are few, but they are so wonderfully altered and combined, that, in a million of men, you shall not find two who are exactly alike. The advantages which result from this diversity are great, but are not always attended to. If the faces of all men were alike, or if instances of this kind were frequent, much inconvenience and confusion would ensue. Impositions would be daily practised; opportunities would be afforded of prying into the secrets of others, of entering into their houses, of assaulting them when they have no suspicion, of committing innumerable crimes with facility, and of eluding discovery. How does it happen that, although all men resemble one another in the general configuration of their faces, they are, at the same time, so different? How does it happen that this dissimilarity is observed even among those who are descended from the same common parents? No reason, I presume, can be assigned but the will and power of God, who, in this as in every other instance, has provided for the safe and comfortable intercourse of mankind.

The arguments which I have brought forward, are sufficient to establish our minds in the belief of the doctrine of Providence, which was acknowledged by the wiser Heathens, and is explicitly and fully taught in the Scriptures. By Providence, I do not mean merely a general superintendence of the affairs of the Universe, but a particular care exercised towards every constituent part of it. Some maintain only a general Providence, which consists in upholding certain general laws, and exclaim against the idea of a particular Providence, which takes a concern in individuals and their affairs. It is strange that the latter opinion should be adopted by any person who professes to bow to the authority of Scripture—which declares that a sparrow does not fall to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father, and that the hairs of our head are all numbered—or by any man who has calmly listened to the dictates of reason. If God has certain designs to accomplish with respect to, or by means of, his intelligent creatures, I should wish to know how his intention can be fulfilled without particular attention to their circumstances, their movements, and all the events of their life? I confess, that I do not distinctly understand what is meant by a general, to the exclusion of a particular, Providence. If it mean, that God takes care of the world, but not of particular things in the world, of the human race, but not of individual men, I am not surprised that I do not understand it, because it is absolutely unintelligible. How can a whole be taken care of without taking care of its parts; or a species be preserved if the individuals are neglected? "We cannot conceive of any reasons than can influence the Deity to exercise any providence over the world, which are not likewise reasons for extending it to all that happens in the world. As far as it is confined to generals, or overlooks any individual, or any event, it is incomplete, and therefore unsuitable to the idea of a perfect Being."*

It is urged as a formidable objection against a particular Providence, that it is inconsistent with the

* Eccl. ix. 1. † Ps. lviii. 11. ‡ Ps. ix. 16.

* Price's Dissert.

liberty of man, and the general laws which divine wisdom has established. It supposes the occasional suspension of those laws, and such interference with human agency, as is subversive of freedom. But this objection, as Dr. Price observes, "shews narrow views. It would indeed, be impossible, if a man, for example, happens to be under a wall when it is falling, to prevent his being killed, without suspending the law of gravitation; but how easy would it have been, had his death been an event proper to be excluded, or which was not consistent with exact order and righteousness in the regulation of events; how easy, I say, in this case, would it have been to hinder him from coming too near the dangerous place, or to occasion his coming sooner or later, by insensibly influencing the train of ideas in his mind, and in numberless other methods, which affect not his liberty. And since this was *easy* to be done, and yet *was* not done, we may assuredly conclude that it was not *right* to be done, and that the event did not happen without the counsel and approbation of Providence. In general, every person, whenever any event, favourable or unfavourable, happens to him, has the greatest reason to own the Divine hand in it; because, it appears, as far as we can judge, that had the Deity so pleased, it might have been prevented by a secret direction of natural causes, and of the thoughts of men, without offering any violence to them. How plainly may we perceive, that if we ourselves had a greater acquaintance with the powers of nature, and nearer access to the minds of men, we could easily over-rule and direct many events not at present in our power, agreeably to our own purposes, without the least infringement of the general laws of the world, or of the liberty of mankind! But how much easier must it be for that Being to do this absolutely and perfectly, to whom all the powers of nature are subject, who sees through all dependencies and connexions, and has constant access to the heart of every man, and can turn it whithersoever he pleases! Where, then, can be the difficulty of believing an invisible hand, an universal and ever attentive Providence, which guides all things agreeably to perfect rectitude and wisdom, at the same time that the general laws of the world are left unviolated, and the liberty of moral agents is preserved?"*

As the doctrine of a particular Providence is agreeable both to Scripture and to reason, so it is recommended by its obvious tendency to promote the piety and the consolation of mankind. To a God who governed the world solely by general laws, we might have looked up with reverence, but not with the confidence, and gratitude, and hope, which arise from the belief, that he superintends its minutest affairs. The thought, that he "compasses our paths, and is acquainted with all our ways;" that he watches our steps, orders all the events in our lot; guides and protects us, and supplies our wants, as it were with his own hand; this thought awakens a train of sentiments and feelings highly favourable to devotion, and sheds a cheering light upon the path of life. We consider him as our guardian and our Father; and reposing upon his care, we are assured that, if we trust in him, no evil shall befal us, and no real blessing shall be withheld. The doctrine of a particular Providence is eagerly embraced, and fondly cherished, by the humble and pious; while a general Providence is espoused and maintained by cold-hearted speculatists, whose science, falsely so called, turns from the Author of nature, to the more congenial contemplation of the operation of mechanical laws, and the play of human passions.

* Dissertation on Providence, sect. i.

LECTURE XLII.

ON PROVIDENCE.

Objects of the divine Providence—Its concern in the Preservation and Government of all things; in the Life, and Death, and in all the Actions of Man—Providence the Source of all Good Actions—Discussion of the question, How far Providence is concerned in Sinful Actions—Distinctions of the Calvinistic Theology on this subject.

In the preceding lecture, I endeavoured to prove that there is a Providence, by several arguments. In giving a definition of it, I remarked, that it signifies in general the Divine care, direction, and control, which may be arranged under two heads, the preservation of his creatures, and the government of them.

First, He preserves his creatures. They are as dependent upon him for the continuance of their being, as life in the branch is upon the juice which flows from the trunk, or the growth of the members of the human body is upon the blood which is propelled from the heart. No idea can be more false than to suppose, that the communication of being renders that, to which it is communicated, independent. What is derived is not self-existent. It is, indeed, perfectly distinct from its Maker, as any other work is from the workman; but, if I may speak so, he pervades its essence, and upholds it by the word of his power. But enough was said upon this subject, when we were demonstrating the doctrine of Providence, from the dependence of all created things upon the power which produced them.

Secondly, He governs his creatures, that is, he exerts an influence upon them, unseen and unfelt, and by their means produces certain effects; but, as they differ widely in their properties and their functions, the general term will admit of various modifications of its meaning, in its application to particular subjects. He governs the material system according to those laws which account for the order established, and regulate the movements which are continually going on in it. Hence, in figurative language, he is said to command the sun to rise, the stars to shine, and other natural events to take place. It is his hand which keeps the sun in his place, and wheels the planets around him in their orbits; it is his hand which fixes the mountains on their bases, and confines the ocean within its ancient boundaries. And if those laws are, as we have stated, only the regular modes of his agency in the production of effects, it is evident that the exertion of his power upon the material system is immediate. He governs the vegetable tribes by those laws which relate to the formation and generation of the seed, the protrusion of the stalk or stem, the expansion of the leaves and flowers, and the concoction of the fruit. He so governs them, that not only are the different species preserved, but they continue distinct although growing together, with occasional varieties arising from climate, and soil, and cultivation. Wheat never produces rye, nor oats rice; but from age to age any particular seed multiplies itself, so that the husbandman can calculate with certainty, if not upon the quantity, yet upon the nature of the crop. He governs the lower animals by their instincts, which prove a surer guide to them than even reason is to man. Impelled by those instincts, they choose fit habitations, select their proper food, avoid dangers, rear their young, act in appearance at least prospectively—for instance, when they lay in provisions for winter—and often discover a skill which excites our admiration although a moment's reflection will convince us, that it is not the wisdom of the animal, but of its Maker. The Scripture makes mention of many facts, from which it appears, that they are absolutely under his control. Thus frogs, lice, and

flies, were his instruments in punishing the Egyptians; ravens were his ministers to supply the Prophet Elijah with food; and as, at one time, lions were sent to plague the idolatrous nations, who had taken possession of the vacant seats of the ten tribes, so at another, they were as harmless as lambs, when for his piety towards God, the holy man Daniel had been cast into their den. By their subservience to his will, "beasts, and all cattle, creeping things, and flying fowl, praise the Lord."

The divine government of men, being more important in itself, and attended with greater difficulties, demands closer attention, and a more extended illustration. I begin with observing, that Providence is concerned in the birth of each individual. God has not only appointed that human beings shall be produced according to a general law, but has further settled the number, and the time and order, in which they shall appear. When a man plants a tree, or drops a seed into the ground, he does not know how much fruit it will yield; but the exact sum of the human race is known to him, who is the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. Hence, children are promised in the Scriptures as a blessing, and barrenness is mentioned as a reproach and a punishment; to intimate that both were subject to his disposal. We find too, that the birth of certain persons was foretold before they were conceived in the womb; and we may hence infer, that the birth of all other persons is regulated by the counsel and will of the Almighty. And this will be still more evident, if we consider, that every individual is not a solitary unit, but a link in a chain; and consequently that his appearance at a particular time is necessary to continue the series, to preserve the course of events unbroken, and to secure that other individuals, who are to spring from him, shall appear at the proper season to act their part upon the theatre of the world.

Again, Providence is concerned in our death, as well as in our birth. The natural causes of death are various; as old age, accidents, and diseases slow or rapid in their progress. Nothing is more precarious than human life. It has indeed been made the subject of calculation; but the reasoning proceeds upon general principles, and does not admit of a confident application to particular cases. Life is like a vapour which is dissipated by the wind, or a flower which is chilled by frost, or crushed by the casual tread of the passenger. Yet we cannot doubt, that it is under the direction of Him, without whose knowledge a sparrow does not fall to the ground. Surely it is not by chance that a gift so precious is taken from those upon whom he had bestowed it; that the course of service and trial, through which they are passing, is terminated; that their spirits are dislodged from the habitation which he had assigned to them, and called into his presence, to give an account of the deeds done in the body. The time, the place, and the manner of our death are appointed. No man can evade his doom. Till the fixed period arrive, he is immortal, to whatever dangers he may be exposed; when it comes, all the precautions of wisdom and the contrivances of art cannot save him. "The days of man are determined, the number of his months is with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." "Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth; thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away."* These pious reflections of Job upon the closing scene of life, will appear to be well founded when we reflect that, as the death of every man takes place in consequence of the original sentence pronounced upon us at the fall, it must be considered as inflicted by the hand of our Maker, in the character of a righteous Judge. It is no objection, that some men are said not to live half their days, and others to have their lives prolonged; because the meaning obviously is, that, in the one case, they die sooner than others of the same standing, or sooner than might have been reckoned upon from the strength of their constitution, by the effects of intemperance or by some natural cause; and that, in the other, they survive diseases which threatened to be fatal, and reach a good old age. In both cases the ultimate cause is the will of God, who wounds and heals, who kills and makes alive.

Providence is concerned in all the events of our life. Man has been said to be the artificer of his own fortune; and the saying is founded upon the influence which his conduct is frequently observed to have upon his temporal condition; but it is more worthy of a Heathen or an Atheist, than of a believer in the Scriptures, which declare, that our lot is ordered by the Lord. We find, indeed, that certain actions are commonly followed by certain consequences; and it is right that it should be so, because we should otherwise be like a ship in the wide ocean without a compass, and should have no motive to act in one way rather than in another. This regularity is so far from invalidating the argument for the divine interference in human affairs, that it confirms it, like the order maintained in the material system. But, in human affairs, order does not prevail with equal steadiness. There are frequent deviations from it, which compel us to acknowledge, somewhat in the same way as miracles do, the controlling power of God. "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."* In many cases, industry is frustrated of its reward, and the plans of wisdom prove abortive. Worldly wealth is apportioned according to no fixed law with which we are acquainted, and falls to the share of the weak as well as the worthless, while men of superior talent contend for it in vain. The same remark may be applied to earthly honours; and hence, in the language of worldly men, temporal blessings are called the gifts of fortune, to intimate that in appearance they are distributed blindly, and without any regard to merit. But these things are disposed by the sovereign will of God. "The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the Maker of them all."† "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another."‡

Here I would remark that, although the terms, fortune and chance, are frequently used, they are exceedingly improper, unless they are intended merely to express our ignorance of the causes of events. No rational being, who allows himself to reflect, can suppose that any thing takes place without a cause. As every motion of matter is the effect of impulse, so every action of intelligent creatures is the effect of some motive, or of some previous state of the mind. The turning up of a particular side of a die, is as certainly the result of the laws of nature, as the fall of a heavy body to the earth; and our most careless and unpremeditated actions are as certainly the consequence of thought and volition, as the proceedings which are founded on mature deliberation. But as we cannot trace the motions of the die, we say that it exhibits a certain number by chance; and to chance we ascribe our own actions, when the thoughts which led to them passed so rapidly and lightly through our mind as to leave no impression behind them. By chance, we went to a particular place; by chance, we met with a particular person. But there was no chance in the case; for, if we could recal the previous train of thought which is irrecoverably gone, we should find, that our

* Job xiv. 5, 14, 20.

* Eccl. ix. 11. † Prov. xxii. 2. ‡ Ps. lxxv. 6.

going to the place was as natural as the motion of a ship in a given direction, by the force of the tide or of the wind, and that all the consequences are so many links in a chain of causes and effects. Chance, indeed, is impossible under the government of God; unless we should suppose his government to be partial or imperfect, and that there are some events to which its power does not extend. Nothing seems to be more a matter of chance than the decision of a lot; yet the Scripture says, "the lot is cast into the lap, but he whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."* An arrow shot at random may fall to the ground, or may kill one man as well as another; but in the case of Ahab, it had received a commission, and pierced the bosom of the impious and devoted monarch.† If then, we will speak of chance, let us affix to the term an idea consonant to reason and religion, and let it express solely our ignorance of the causes of events.

With regard to the particulars now mentioned, every person will readily assent to them, as soon as they are accurately and clearly stated. A part of the subject which remains, namely, the divine government of the actions of men, is more difficult, because it involves the question respecting the consistency of the agency of the Creator with the liberty of his creatures. The general fact, that he is concerned in their actions, is manifest from their absolute dependence upon him, in whom they live, and move, and have their being; and from many declarations of Scripture. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will;"‡ and the same thing may surely be said of the subject of kings.

That his Providence is concerned in the good actions of men, will not be denied. Their goodness may seem to justify his interference; and the assistance which he gives will be deemed worthy of the purity and benevolence of his character. It will be readily acknowledged that he excites men to good actions; that he presents to them proper objects and proper motives; that he strengthens their faculties; that he imparts an agreeable feeling to their minds, while they are engaged in them; that he encourages them to persevere amidst difficulties and obstacles; and that he enables them, in many instances at least, to accomplish what they intend. The Scripture asserts, "that God works in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure,"‖ and on this ground calls upon us to be thankful and humble. Against the doctrine of efficacious grace, which is plainly taught in this, and many others passages of Scripture, the common objection is, that it leaves nothing to the human will but a simple concurrence with the motions of grace; and consequently, takes away its power of choosing or refusing, according to its own determination. Without entering into this controversy at present, I observe, that the influence which God is conceived to exert in good actions, is, in some respects, analogous to that which one man exerts upon another, without being suspected of at all intrenching upon his liberty. If one man excite another to a good action; if he lay before him strong inducements to engage in the performance of it; if he strengthen his faculties by culture and exhortation; if he give him every possible assistance, and endeavour to make his duty agreeable to him, we never doubt, when the latter complies, that the action is his own, and that all its merit is imputable to him, although strictly it did not originate with himself, and he perhaps would not have thought of it, unless the former had been his monitor and counsellor. We never dream that he is less free in this, than in any other action which he spontaneously performed, because in whatever way his consent was obtained, he did consent, and the action was perfectly voluntary. There is no difference between the Divine agency upon men, and the agency of one man upon another, except that God is conceived to exert immediately some power upon the minds of his creatures, which one creature cannot exert upon another. Whether this power is any infringement of their liberty, we cannot determine by abstract reasoning, because we are ignorant of its nature and operation. The question must be decided by experience, which assures those who are the subjects of this influence, that they retain perfect freedom of choice, and by Scripture, which declares that God makes them willing in the day of his power. It is certain, that its operation is in strict accordance with the nature of man; that it does not compel, but inclines him; that it takes away nothing which is essential to moral responsibility, because, whenever choice is exercised, a man is accountable. The concern of Providence in good actions will be admitted by all, but those who, carrying their notions of liberty to an extravagant height, would exempt the human mind from the government of God, and constitute man an independent sovereign, who sways the sceptre of his will without control.

The concern of Providence in the sinful actions of creatures cannot be so satisfactorily explained, because it is difficult to ascertain how far the Divine agency may proceed, without having any part in the sinfulness of the action. The followers of Manes or Manicheus solved the difficulty by maintaining, after the ancient Persians, two principles, the one good and the other evil; and some individuals and sects have not hesitated to affirm, that God is the Author of sin. These impious errors we indignantly reject; but while we speak of them with abhorrence, let us beware lest, in attempting to explain the subject before us, we unwittingly fall into them, or say any thing which may imply, that our sins are chargeable upon God.

First, God permits sinful actions: "My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts: and they walked in their own counsels."* "In times past, he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways;"† that is, to practise idolatry, and to live in those sins with which the heathens were polluted. The permission of sinful actions does not import that he approves of them; for, as he is infinitely holy, sin must always be the object of his abhorrence; and accordingly, we find him testifying against the sins into which he permits men to fall, denouncing his threatenings against them, and actually punishing the sinners. Nor is permission to be considered as an inactive sufferance of events to take place, without knowing them beforehand, or without being able to hinder them. Either of these suppositions is unworthy of God; the one impeaches his omniscience, and the other his omnipotence. As things future are known to him, as well as things present, and as he declares the end from the beginning, so he is able, in many ways, to prevent creatures from acting. He can influence their thoughts and volitions; he can withhold opportunities; he can deprive them of ability; he can place obstacles before them, which it is not possible to surmount. Hence we may perceive what is implied in the permission of sinful actions. God does nothing to prevent them, except that he testifies against them by conscience, and by his word, which is full of dissuasions from sin and of considerations which have a moral tendency to restrain men from committing it. He does not keep them out of the way of temptation; he does not take away the means of effecting their purposes; he does not, by any influence upon their minds, repress their desires and inclinations; he does not

* Prov. xvi. 33. † 1 Kings xxii. 2 Chron. xviii.
‡ Prov. xxi. 1. ‖ Phil. ii. 13.

* Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12. † Acts xiv. 16.

represent to them, in a strong and efficacious manner, the wickedness of their conduct, or terrify them with an apprehension of the consequences; he does not employ other men to oppose them; he does not, as he could do, change their hearts, and turn them to the love and practice of holiness. It follows that, as they are left to themselves, in circumstances which afford full scope for the exercise of their natural dispositions, the sinful actions which God has permitted do not fail to take place. They are not in the number of contingencies, or of things which may, or may not happen: there is a certainty of the event, without which it could not be the object of the Divine foreknowledge. It has been said, that the permission of sinful actions is so far from being merely an inactive sufferance of them, that it implies a positive act of his will, in as much as he wills to permit sin for ends worthy of himself. And here this distinction is made, that God does not will sin considered in itself, but the permission of sin, because evil itself cannot be the object of his will, but he must always will what is good. If sin is said to be the means of manifesting the Divine glory, it does not follow that God, who wills the end, must also will the mean considered in itself. Sin is in this case called a mean, not causally or effectively, but materially and objectively, as it furnishes an occasion of glorifying God. It is a mean, not in itself, for its natural tendency is to dishonour him, but by accident, or in consequence of his wisdom, which brings good out of evil. He who wills the end, wills also the means, but not always with the same kind of will; for, if the means are of a different nature from the end, he may will the latter effectively because it is good, but the former only permissively because they are evil; the object of his will being not properly the means themselves, but the use of them. I know not whether you have clearly apprehended this distinction, nor am I sure that it will throw much light upon the subject; but I have mentioned it, because it has been considered as important by some theological writers.

Secondly, He limits sinful actions; for, we are not to suppose that, when he permits men to sin, or leaves them to themselves, he exempts them entirely from his control. Such a supposition would be inconsistent with the dependent condition of creatures, and with the character of God as the Governor of the world. They are at all times under his superintendence, and subject to such restraints as it may seem proper to his wisdom to impose. Were the elements let loose, and suffered to exert all their fury, to mingle and conflict with unbridled rage, the earth would exhibit a scene of confusion and devastation, and the whole human race would be swept away in one general ruin. Similar would be the effect, if the appetites and passions, emancipated from physical and moral restraints, should display all their violence and malignity. If ambition, and avarice, and lust, and cruelty, and oppression, knew no bounds, the earth, where so much peace and comfort are enjoyed, would be transformed into the image of hell; with this difference, that its inhabitants, being mortal, would gradually melt away by the calamities which they mutually inflicted, and the race would become finally extinct. The designs of the Almighty could not be carried on without the application of checks and restraints; they would be embarrassed and defeated by the wayward movements of the wicked, driven hither and thither by the wild and tumultuary fluctuations of their passions. If the revengeful man had always an opportunity to gratify his resentment, how many lives would be lost, the preservation of which is necessary, not only for the comfort and prosperity of families, but for the continuation of the succession in a particular line, and for other important purposes, which the individuals thus preserved are appointed to accomplish! If despotic power were suffered to gather strength and to extend its sway according to its lawless wish, the most flourishing regions of the earth would, in the progress of time, be characterized by the same stagnation of the human mind, the same decline of agriculture and the arts, the same degradation and consumption of the human species, which are seen in the fine countries that groan under the iron yoke of the Turkish dominion. Had persecutors been able to carry into full effect their plans of destruction, the church of Christ must have long since existed only on the bloody page which recorded the fate of its martyrs. But Providence opposed various obstacles to the rage of the Heathen emperors in the early ages, and to the still more diabolical procedure of Antichrist and his followers; so that, although thousands and tens of thousands were the victims of their unhallowed power, a remnant was always saved; the succession of the friends of truth was secured; and the prediction of our Saviour was fulfilled, that "the gates of hell should not prevail" against his church.* "The remainder of the wrath of men thou restrainest." God says to the wicked, as to the waves of the sea, "Hitherto shall ye come, and no further." Their strength or courage fails; difficulties arise which deter them; or their passions are kept at bay by the opposing passions of others; or they change their intentions, and of their own accord abandon their work before it is finished. Such means are always at the command of Providence; and there is still another way in which it can set bounds to the wickedness of men, by depriving them, through disease or a sudden stroke, of bodily or mental ability, so that they can sin no more; or by cutting them off in the midst of their projects, like Herod the persecutor, who was smitten by an angel, and perished in a miserable manner.

Thirdly, He over-rules sinful actions, so as to accomplish great and good designs by them; and thus he makes the wrath of man praise him. The envy of the sons of Jacob against their brother Joseph, which prompted them to sell him into Egypt, was the occasion of his elevation to the highest authority in that kingdom; in consequence of which he saved alive his father and his family, in a famine which afterwards took place. "As for you," he said to them, "ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring it to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."† The reproach and persecution of the ungodly, which cause much disquiet and distress to the people of God, are made the means of exercising and strengthening their graces, and of fitting them more and more for a state of perfection. God "chastens them" in this and in other ways, "that they may be partakers of his holiness;"‡ and "their afflictions work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."‖ The introduction of sin into the world, which was followed by the fall and all its dreadful consequences, has given rise to the brightest manifestations of the glory of God, and the highest exercise of his benevolence, in the mediation of Christ, and the salvation of the guilty through his blood. But although God turns evil to good, it by no means follows that men may do evil that good may come. His procedure is like that of a skilful physician, who, finding poison in existence, so proportions and mixes it with other ingredients, that it proves medicinal; while they are like the man, who should first make a poison, and then administer it with a rash and presumptuous hand. The natural tendency of sin is only to evil; and under the management of creatures, nothing but evil will result from it. No man, therefore, should commit sin with a view to good, not only because the mean which he employs is absolutely forbidden, but because it is calculated to produce exact-

* Matt. xvi. 18. † Gen. l. 20. ‡ Heb. xii. 10. ‖ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

willing to pardon, but he would not cancel the guilt of the sinner, unless an atonement were offered for it. He would be just in justifying the ungodly; he would make "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other." Hence you perceive that the covenant could not have been made with men themselves; for to them the fulfilment of the terms would have been impossible. It could be made only with a Divine Person, who, joining himself to our nature, could bear almighty wrath, and magnify the law by perfect obedience.

The other party in the covenant of grace was the Son, who sustained a public character, and was the representative of his people. The second covenant, as we have said, could not have been made with men, because they were under a sentence of condemnation for the violation of the first. No other creature, however dignified and richly endowed with moral excellencies, was qualified to enter into a federal transaction with God in behalf of the guilty, because the terms were too high to be fulfilled even by the ability of an archangel. The universe was not then in existence; but that eye which sees the future as well as the present, did not behold in any of its provinces a single being, who was worthy to stand forth as an intercessor for our fallen race; and if a Divine person had not appeared to undertake the arduous task, our condition would have been as hopeless as that of the apostate angels, for whom no remedial scheme has been devised. But the Father appointed his own Son, as one who was both able and willing to befriend us; and the office which was assigned to him he most readily accepted. "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart."* These words are expressive of his cheerful compliance with the terms of the covenant, and they are recorded in the volume of the divine decree, concerning the salvation of men, or of the scriptures, which are a faithful transcript of it. Animated with zeal for the glory of his Father, and with ineffable love to perishing sinners, he "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth;" that is, it gave the highest pleasure to his benevolent heart to assume the character of our Redeemer, although he was fully apprised of the humiliation and sufferings to which it would be necessary to submit, in order to accomplish his design.

In consequence of his consent to the terms of the covenant, he was constituted the head or representative of his people. He became a public person, who acted in the name of others. Some may think that, as men had not yet fallen, it would be more accurate to say, that it was then agreed that he should become their representative, as soon as their circumstances should require his interposition; but, if we believe that the covenant was made from eternity, and that they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, there seems to be a necessity for admitting that he was invested with this character prior to the commencement of time. A new relation was formed between him and the guilty, in virtue of which he was made answerable for their guilt, and came under an obligation to perform the obedience which they owed to the law, that his righteousness might be imputed to them, as if they had obeyed and suffered in their own persons. That this doctrine has a foundation in Scripture is evident from the comparison, formerly referred to, which Paul institutes between Christ and Adam, whom we acknowledge to have sustained a federal relation to his children. "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."* I have quoted this long passage, in order to show you how the Apostle runs a parallel between Adam and Christ, with a design to teach us at once in what respect they agree, and also in what they disagree. The disagreement consists in the difference of the effects resulting from their respective agency, the one having been the cause of guilt and depravity, and death; the other, of righteousness and life. The agreement consists in their public character, and the representation of Christ is as clearly stated as that of the first man. In both cases the language is similar, and implies, not an accidental, but an instituted connexion between them and others, in consequence of which others are affected by what they have respectively done. By the one came condemnation, by the other justification; by the one we are made sinners, and by the other righteous. If Adam had not been our federal head, we should not have suffered by his first transgression more than by his subsequent sins, or by those of our nearer progenitors; and we may reason in the same manner, that, if Christ had not been our federal head, we should have been no more benefited by his obedience than by that of any of the saints. Its merit would have terminated in himself, and its influence upon us would have been merely that of example.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christ is called the surety of the covenant.† A surety is a person who gives security for another, that he will perform something which the other is bound to do; that is, in case of failure, will perform it for him. The title, as given to our Saviour, implies that he came under an obligation to fulfil the condition of the covenant for his people. He undertook, as we shall afterwards see, to yield the obedience which they owed to the law, and to make satisfaction to Divine justice for their sins. Some, however, have taken a different view of the matter. Christ, they say, is surety for God to man, or has pledged himself that, to those who enter into covenant with God, the promises shall be performed. It is true, that "all the promises in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God;"‡ or, in other words, that he has ratified them in this sense, that his blood having been shed as the price of the blessings which they contain, the performance of them ought to be confidently expected by believers. But the performance depends solely upon the justice and faithfulness of God. A surety is admitted, when a doubt or suspicion is entertained of the person for whom he is bound, and his credit is brought forward to supply what is wanting in the other. Keeping this idea of a surety in mind, we shall perceive, to say the least, a manifest impropriety in calling Christ a surety for God; for it implies that the simple promise of God is not worthy of trust, and could not be depended upon till it was confirmed by the pledged truth of another. But the Scriptures represent the word of God as the sole ground of faith. We must believe, because he is true and faithful, and will not deceive us. His word is the highest possible security; it stands in need of no confirmation; and if he has been pleased

* Ps. xl. 7, 8.

* Rom. v. 15—19. † Heb. vii. 22. ‡ 2 Cor. i. 20.

to sanction it with his oath, it is not because an oath was necessary to render it worthy of credit, but in condescension to human infirmity. "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."* The promise is as immutable as the oath; and the latter was added, not to render the former more sure in itself, but to remove our unreasonable suspicions. How could any person be a surety for God? Is his sincerity more fully ascertained? Has his faithfulness been more clearly established? I know not what some men mean, nor am I sure that they understand themselves, when they say that Christ was surety for God.

There are others who, granting that he was surety only for man, explain his suretiship in a manner not consonant to Scripture. He was surety, they say, that men would perform the obedience which God requires from them in the covenant of grace. In some instances, this mistake is founded upon another respecting the nature of the covenant, as being an agreement entered into between God and men themselves, in which spiritual blessings are promised upon certain conditions. I shall afterwards consider this opinion; and, in the mean time, I observe, that the notion of Christ's being surety for our obedience, receives no countenance from Scripture. He has, indeed, obtained for his people that grace by which they are enabled to obey; but the actual communication of it belongs to the Father, who has engaged in the covenant to bestow it. The obedience of believers is secured, not by any pledge which Christ has given in their name, but by the following promise of the Father: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."†

A surety for a bankrupt—for this is the only comparison which the present case will admit—is one who engages to satisfy his creditors, by paying his debts. Hence, when Jesus Christ is called the Surety of the new covenant, the meaning evidently is, that he undertook to discharge the debt which sinners owed to the law and justice of God, the debt of obedience, and the debt of suffering.

Our Saviour is farther called the Mediator of the covenant; a title which imports that he interposes between God and men with a view to reconcile them. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."‡ For this office he is qualified by the constitution of his person. Possessed of the Divine nature from eternity, he agreed to assume the human, that he might be allied to both parties; and he knew how to establish a perfect harmony between the glory of God and the salvation of his guilty creatures. There are so many observations to be made upon the necessity of the Mediatorial office, the qualification of our Saviour for it, and its effects, that they would detain us too long from entering upon the other parts of the subject. I shall therefore reserve them for another occasion.

The covenant by which men are saved is one, and was made with Christ before the foundation of the world. Many Theologians, however, are of opinion, that there are two covenants connected with the salvation of men, which they call the covenant of redemption, and the covenant of grace, and distinguish them in the following manner. The covenant of redemption was made from eternity; but the covenant of grace is made in time: The parties in the former are God and his Son, the parties in the latter are God and sinners: The covenant of redemption is the agreement between the Divine Persons, which we have already explained, and the condition of it is the righteousness of Christ; the covenant of grace is the agreement which God makes with sinners in the Gospel, promising to them spiritual and eternal blessings upon the condition of faith. There is no reason to exclaim against this statement as fraught with dangerous error; nor should we give way to that weak zeal, which is startled at modes of expression different from our own, and hastily concludes, that they are meant to convey a difference of meaning. If we examine it with candour, we shall find that, in substance, it accords with our own views of the subject. I acknowledge, that there does not appear to be any ground in Scripture for the notion of two covenants. The blood of Christ is called "the blood of the covenant," not "of the covenants," as we may presume it would have been called, if it had been the condition of the covenant of redemption, and the foundation of the covenant of grace. The truth is, that what those Divines call the covenant of grace, is merely the administration of what they call the covenant of redemption, for the purpose of communicating its blessings to those for whom they were intended; and cannot be properly considered as a covenant, because it is not suspended upon a proper condition, as we shall presently see. At the same time it is right to remark, that it is frequently spoken of as a covenant, and is said to be made with men themselves. "I will make with you an everlasting covenant."* "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord."† "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure."‡ I may add, that the Confession of Faith, which we receive as a standard of doctrine, although we sometimes beg leave to dissent from some of its expressions, gives the same view of the covenant of grace: "Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by the covenant of works, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; whereby he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe."‖ Still I am persuaded that the doctrine taught in our church, which has been adopted also by many others, is more accurate, that the covenant by which we are saved is one, whether you call it, the covenant of redemption, or the covenant of grace, for neither the one name nor the other is found in the Scripture; and that what some call the covenant of grace, is nothing but the dispensation by which the benefits that Christ purchased by his obedience and death are imparted to believers.

The use of the term *condition*, in reference to the covenant of grace, may also be considered as objectionable, because it commonly means something, which when done by one party, gives a right to what was promised by the other. To call faith, therefore, the condition of the covenant, may seem to imply, that there is merit in faith, which entitles us to salvation. This, however, is far from being the meaning of those whose sentiments we are at present considering. The term is used by them in a lower sense, and simply signifies something which goes before another, and without which the other cannot be obtained. They do

* Heb. vi. 17, 18. † Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.
‡ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

* Isa. lv. 3. † Heb. viii. 10.
‡ 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. ‖ West. Conf. c. vii. § 3.

not assign merit to faith, but simply precedence. According to them, faith is the condition of the covenant, because the promise of salvation will be performed to none but believers. They hold as well as we, that it is only the means of obtaining an interest in the salvation offered in the Gospel; and that it is itself an effect of grace, being wrought in the heart by the Spirit of regeneration. If they err, then, it is not in sentiment, but in language; and we should be cautious in affirming that they err even here, lest the censure should recoil upon persons of whom we are accustomed to speak with great veneration, and to whom some are disposed to look up as almost infallible oracles, the framers of those public standards which we have adopted; for they did not hesitate to make use of the obnoxious term. "The grace of God," they say in the Larger Catechism, "is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him; and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him, promiseth and giveth his Holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces."* As, however, the word, condition, has been often employed in an unscriptural sense, and is apt to suggest false ideas to the ignorant and unwary, it is more prudent to lay it aside.

I remark by the way, that the vehemence with which some in our church have opposed the use of the term, while they might have known that nothing improper was meant by it, is altogether unjustifiable. It arose either from ignorance that the term is found in our standards, or from dishonest zeal, which condemns in an antagonist what it tolerates in a friend. And here we may remark the improper conduct of most churches in reference to their standards. Having once adopted them, they regard them as the laws of the Medes and Persians, which must never be altered. As if their infallibility were ascertained, they are never subjected to revision; whereas they should be frequently revised, that such changes may be made in sentiment and language as are suggested by more correct views of the Scriptures. Then we should have avoided the awkwardness of having standards to which we assent without reserve or qualification, but in which there are expressions that we cannot use without incurring the suspicion of error. I know only of one exception from this practice, so unbecoming Protestants and daily students of the Scriptures.†

We cannot exercise the same indulgence towards every view which has been taken by Theologians of the covenant of grace, for, by some, it has been grossly misrepresented, so that nothing remains but the name. According to them, the design of the death of Christ was to make God reconcileable to sinners, and to procure a new covenant with them, in which pardon and eternal life are promised on the condition of faith, repentance, and obedience. If sometimes they call faith alone the condition of the covenant, we must beware of being imposed upon by the sound of a word, to which they have affixed a peculiar meaning favourable to their own system; for it does not signify, as in the language of other divines, reliance upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation, but such a belief of the truth as leads to obedience, and derives all its value and efficacy from its effects. Having erected this fanciful structure, they give it the name of the new covenant, the gospel covenant, or the covenant of grace, because they pretend God has manifested his grace in it by proposing easier terms. In the first covenant, he exacted perfect obedience; but now he requires only sincere obedience, in consideration of the infirmity of man, who, being enfeebled by sin, and surrounded with temptations, is incapable of complying with the strict demands of the original law. The remedy, in this case, is repentance for defects and transgressions; and, through the mediation of Christ, God accepts of our upright endeavours to serve him. But, whatever name may be given to this imaginary transaction, it is truly and formally a covenant of works, the nature of which consists in suspending the reward upon certain performances, whether they be many or few, difficult or easy. That is a covenant of works, which makes works of any kind the condition of the promise. The words of the Apostle are express, and expose the vanity and criminality of this attempt to join together two things, which are, and ever will be opposed to each other: "If it be by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work."* There are only two laws by which men can hope to be saved, the law of works, and the law of faith; of which the former says, "Do this, and thou shalt live;" but this is the language of the latter, "To him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."† The scheme which we are now considering, is a clumsy and audacious attempt to blend together two methods of salvation which are essentially different. It supposes, besides, what is absolutely impossible, that God may relax the strictness of his law, and require less from men than he once did, because they are become unable to give more. But how could God demand less, if he be the same holy and righteous being that he was in the beginning? The inability of men to yield perfect obedience, is not owing to him but to themselves, and consists in unwillingness, in aversion of heart. It does not consequently deprive him of his rights, nor would it be worthy of his character to lower the standard because his subjects are dissatisfied with it, and by doing so, to give his sanction to their unjustifiable revolt. Are they not commanded "to love him with all their heart, and soul, and mind, and strength? and to love their neighbour as themselves? And is not this the whole of the law; the utmost that was ever required? "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."‡ I add, that, although it were granted that faith, repentance, and sincere obedience are now accepted instead of perfect righteousness, the covenant, of which these were the condition, would not deserve to be called the covenant of grace on account of the easiness of its terms. None will deem them easy but the man who is ignorant of himself, and of the total corruption of human nature. To us, in whose flesh there dwells no good thing, they are as impossible as perfect obedience. The person who is reduced to the last stage of weakness by a mortal disease, is as incapable of raising a weight of ten pounds, as a weight of a hundred. I conclude, therefore, that this view of the covenant of grace is erroneous, has no foundation in Scripture, is contrary to the moral attributes of God, fosters pride, overthrows the Gospel of Christ, and is calculated to deceive sinners, with the vain hope of obtaining salvation by their own efforts, while the terms which it proposes are not more within the compass of their ability than the strictest and most extensive demands.

* Quest. 32.

† It is believed that the exception here alluded to, was that of the Protestant Church of France, which revised its standards at every period of two years.

LECTURE XLIX.

ON THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

Condition of the Covenant—Preliminary Remarks on the Engagement to perform it into which the Son entered—The

* Rom. xi. 6. † Ib. iv. 5. ‡ Ib. iii. 31.

Condition included, First, Perfect Obedience to the Precepts of the Law; Secondly, Satisfactory Sufferings for the Sins of his People—Promises of the Covenant considered as they respected Christ himself and as they respected the Elect—View of the Blessings promised to the Elect.

A COVENANT is an agreement between two parties who come under mutual engagements. Something is to be done by one of the parties, in consequence of which the other party binds himself to do another thing in return. When a master, for example, enters into an agreement or covenant with a servant, he prescribes certain duties to be performed by the servant, and promises to recompense him with suitable wages. By consenting to the compact, the servant becomes bound to perform the stipulated work, and the master is bound to bestow the reward when the term of labour is finished. In a covenant therefore, there are two parts, a condition with a promise; and sometimes a penalty is added to be executed in case of failure. The two former are found in the covenant of grace; and I now proceed to consider them in their order.

The condition of a covenant is that work or service which gives the performer a right to the promised reward. In order to learn what was the condition of the covenant of grace, let us remember that Jesus Christ, by becoming the surety of his people, took upon himself those terms which it would have been necessary for them to fulfil, in order to obtain the favor of God, and a title to happiness. What these were, will appear, if we consider the original obligation under which man was placed by his Creator, and the situation into which he had brought himself by disobedience. The first covenant enjoined perfect obedience to the Divine law as the condition of life; and the will of the Maker of the covenant was signified to Adam, in the prohibition to taste the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As the prohibition was not founded on the nature of things, but on the sovereign will of God, it was a clear intimation to our first parent, that his hope of continued and augmented felicity was suspended upon his unreserved submission to the authority of his Creator. He was to obey him in every thing, and to ask no reason but his command; he was to live for him alone, and to consecrate all his powers to his service. Such was the original condition of the covenant; but something more is now demanded, in consequence of the melancholy change which has taken place in the circumstances of man. As he was a fallible creature, a penalty was added in the beginning to enforce the precept, and to vindicate the honour of the Lawgiver, if the covenant was violated. To this penalty, Adam became obnoxious as soon as he had sinned; and his descendants are under the sentence of death, which was first pronounced upon him.

Hence we perceive what must have been, and actually was, the condition of the covenant of grace. For what was requisite that fallen man might enjoy peace with his offended Maker, and regain the happiness which he had lost by transgression? Although the first covenant had been broken, its claims subsisted in full force. It still demanded that perfect obedience which man had failed to yield, and in consequence of this failure, farther demanded that its penalty or curse should be executed upon the guilty. As man could not himself satisfy these claims, they devolved upon his surety, and that too, without any abatement; for, to suppose them to have been relaxed, on account of the dignity of the person, and his intimate relation to the Father, is to suppose God to have been less holy and just in the covenant of grace, than in the covenant of works. You see, then, that the fulfilment of the terms of the one covenant, was the express condition of the other. All that was required from sinners was required from their Saviour. The second covenant could not be established but by an exact compliance with the requisitions of the first. And the demands of the first covenant were enlarged by the breach of it; for, from man in a state of innocence, it required only obedience to its precepts; but from guilty man, and from Christ his representative, it required not only obedience but suffering.

Before I proceed to explain, more distinctly, the condition of the covenant, there are some remarks to be made upon the engagement into which our Saviour entered to perform it. The engagement was perfectly voluntary on his part; there existed no prior obligation, nor was there any authority by which he could be compelled to it. As a divine person, he was subject to no law, and acknowledged no superior; for, although we call the Father the first Person of the Trinity, we do not assign to him any pre-eminence of dignity and power, but merely state the order of subsistence. To suppose the Son to be inferior to him, would be inconsistent with the belief, that the same individual essence, and consequently the same perfections belong equally to both. He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God."* Supreme dominion is necessarily attached to true and proper Divinity. The Son is "Kings of kings, and Lord of lords." With this supreme authority which we attribute to him, the engagement into which he entered to perform the condition of the covenant, was not incompatible. It was an act of his will, concurring with his Father in the scheme of redemption, and consenting to execute the part of the work which was allotted to him; but it did not imply a present subjection to the authority of his Father, or the immediate assumption of an inferior station. It was merely a purpose thus expressed, to assume that station at the proper period; a promise to descend to the earth in the fulness of time, and to appear in the form of a servant. By this promise of obedience, to be afterwards performed in the nature of man, the Son, as God, no more subjected himself to the Father, than the Father subjected himself to the Son, by promising to give him a right to demand the stipulated reward. I would not, however, be understood to insinuate, that he was not, from eternity, constituted our Surety, and that he only assumed his character at a posterior date. If grace was given to us in Christ before the world began, and the elect were then chosen in him to salvation, there seems to be a necessity for admitting, that a relation was then formed between him and his people; but it could not immediately have all the effect which it afterwards had, when he was manifested in the flesh. But it gave him a present interest in them; it was the foundation of that gracious economy which commenced after the fall, and which he carried on by his Spirit, and by the external ministry of angels and prophets; and it was the ground on which God pardoned sinners, and bestowed spiritual blessings upon them, prior to the incarnation and death of his Son.

I shall afterwards take an opportunity to speak of Christ as Mediator, and of the mysterious constitution of his person. It is certain that he is Mediator in both natures, the divine and the human; and hence it may seem to follow, that in both he is subject to the Father; and the difficulty remains, how one Divine Person could be subject to another. The proper solution of it, I think, is to consider the subjection, so far as the divine nature was concerned, as merely economical; and, being voluntary on the part of the Son, submitted to only for a time, and to promote a particular design, it manifestly does not imply any degradation. He did not surrender his Divinity, or any of his perfections, or any of his rights, but solely consented to sustain, for a season, a subordinate office, for the glory of the Godhead, and the salvation of a perishing world. Retaining his original glory, he was pleased to draw a veil over it in the eyes of men; to empty himself, ac-

* Phil. ii. 6.

cording to the strong language of Scripture, and take upon him the form of a servant. The case would be similar, as far, at least, as human can resemble Divine things, if the son of a king, who was associated with him in the throne, should condescend, for reasons of state, to receive and execute the orders of his father. His title to supreme authority would be unimpaired, and, in fact, he would actually retain it undiminished, although he had waived the exercise of it for a time. The subjection of the human nature to the Father, was real, like that of any other creature to the Creator. It was different, indeed, from any other creature, in this respect, that the second person of the Trinity had united it to himself; but, in consequence of this union, there was no communication of properties from the one nature to the other, so that the human was deified, and raised above the authority of law. Although subsisting in the same hypostasis with the divine nature of the Son, it continued perfectly distinct, and was consequently under the same moral obligation, which binds the highest as well as the lowest creature to obey the will of the Author of its being. We may therefore say, that Christ as Mediator was subject to his Father, using the word, subject, in such a sense as is not inconsistent with his Supreme Divinity, and always remembering, that his subjection in the divine nature was voluntary and temporary, but in the human nature is necessary and perpetual. The necessity of maintaining the subjection of his whole person as sustaining the mediatorial character to the Father is obvious, because the acts of his human nature alone would not have accomplished the redemption of his people. A higher agency was requisite to fulfil the terms of the covenant. The Son of God must be made under the law, and the Lord of glory must be crucified.

I now proceed to speak more particularly of the condition of the covenant, which our Surety fulfilled. In many theological books, we are taught that it comprehended the three following things, holiness of nature, righteousness of life, and satisfaction for sin by sufferings and death. To answer these demands, our Redeemer assumed human nature without a stain, gave perfect obedience to the precepts of the law, and shed his blood as an atonement for sin. I am disposed to call in question the accuracy of this statement. To the second and third particular I have no objection, and believe that they were truly the terms of the covenant; but I do not see that the first was any part of the condition. My reason for dissenting in this instance from the common opinion, is that, besides satisfaction to divine justice, which is now required in consequence of sin, no other thing can be conceived to be the condition of the covenant of grace, which was not the condition of the covenant of works. Now, holiness of nature was not part of that condition, because man already was possessed of it when the covenant was made, and all therefore that could be required of him was, that he should act agreeably to the principles and dispositions with which his Maker had endowed him. A condition bears reference to the future, and implies something to be done. No man enters into a covenant with another, on the ground of what he at present is, but on the ground of what he promises to be or to do. God did not promise eternal life to Adam, because he had a holy nature, but in the event of his obeying the command which he had given him respecting the tree of knowledge. The only condition prescribed to him was obedience, and it is the only condition, therefore, which could be prescribed to his Surety. It is true indeed that man, having lost the holiness of his nature, is bound to account for it; but this is done, not by substituting the holiness of the human nature of Christ as a compensation for the want of it, but by his atonement on the cross for all sin original and actual: and being indispensably necessary to communion with God and the enjoyment of heaven, it is restored to the elect by the operation of his Spirit. The holiness of his human nature, I consider rather as a qualification for the work which he was appointed to perform, than as any part of the work itself. It was necessary that it should be a holy thing, not only because an impure nature would not have been admitted into personal union with the divine, but because it would not have been acceptable to God, or capable of performing a single action of which he would approve. Its holiness was an indispensable pre-requisite, according to his own saying. "First make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good." The Father therefore engaged to provide it, and actually gave it to him at the appointed time. "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me."* These are the words of our Saviour, and they imply, that the human nature was given to him by his Father that he might have something to offer, namely, the immaculate oblation of his body and soul. We believe that all that our Saviour did and suffered in the character of our Surety was meritorious of salvation. But there is no merit in the simple possession of a gift, however excellent in itself; and merit arises from the proper use of the gift, from the use of it according to the will of the giver, and for the purposes which he had in view in bestowing it. The holiness of the human nature of Christ was a gift of his Father, by which he was qualified for his work, and in receiving it, considered as a man, he was passive. There was therefore no place for merit, although his unspotted purity was in the highest degree pleasing in the eyes of his Father. His merit consisted in the use of the gift, in retaining his holy nature amidst all the temptations of Satan and the world, and in exerting its faculties in the service of his Father. It could not therefore be a part of the condition of the covenant, which consisted in active duties, in doing something which God had enjoined, and to which he had promised a reward. For these reasons, I reject the first particular, which is usually mentioned as included in the condition of the covenant, and shall confine your attention to the second and the third.

First, The Father required from our Surety perfect obedience to the precepts of the law. Such obedience was demanded from man under the first covenant; and as the obligation of the moral law is not founded on occasional circumstances, but on the nature and relation of God and his creatures, the same obedience must have been required in the second. There was no possibility that man could obtain happiness unless this obedience was performed by himself, or by another whom the Lawgiver should admit to act in his name. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,"† is the answer which the law returns to the sinner, who asks what he shall do to inherit that life. It is evident that the same obedience was required from our Saviour, when acting as our federal head. As he is said to have been made under the law, when he was made of a woman, so we hear him expressing, in the view of his future incarnation, his intention to fulfil it: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart."‡ He knew and loved the law, and he came into the world to honour it by submission to its authority. He was always ready to recognise his obligation to obedience. By receiving baptism from the hands of his forerunner, he solemnly and publicly dedicated himself to the service of his Father; and his whole conduct was a commentary upon his own declaration: "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, when no

* Heb. x. 5. † Matt. xix. 17. ‡ Ps. xl. 8.

man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."* Accordingly he diffused on all around him the light of holiness, as well as of heavenly doctrine. In every relation and condition of life, in his conduct towards friends and enemies, in peace and in trouble, before the eyes of the public and in retirement with his own followers, he exhibited a perfect example of it. He glorified God, he loved man, he went about doing good. As he boldly challenged his enemies to convict him of sin, so he reckoned with the utmost confidence upon the approbation of his Father. "He that sent me, is with me; the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him."†

It may be objected, that the obedience of Christ, however perfect, could not be available for us, since he owed it for himself, because as man he was subject to the same moral law, which is obligatory upon all mankind. Its merit, therefore, could not be imputed to others, but must have terminated upon himself. Different answers may be returned to this objection. It may be said, in the first place, that, although it was performed in the human nature, it was the obedience of our Mediator in his whole person, and consequently, that he did not owe it for himself, because, being the Son of God, he was not subject to the law. It may be alleged, indeed, that as Mediator he was subject to the Father in the sense already explained; but it should be considered that, this subjection being voluntary, the obedience which resulted from it was not necessary for himself, and could therefore be accepted in behalf of those for whose benefit it was intended. It may be said again, that even his human nature owed no obedience for itself, in order to its admission into heaven, but in virtue of its union to his Divine person, was immediately entitled to all the glory and felicity of which it was capable. Whatever obedience, therefore, he performed upon earth and in a state of humiliation and trial, was not upon his own account; and hence, according to justice, the benefit of it might be transferred to his people. It may be said once more, that, although the human nature of Christ was necessarily subject to the law of God as the eternal rule of righteousness to all intelligent creatures, yet it was from choice that it became subject to the law in that particular form, in which it was binding upon men. To them it bore the form of a covenant; but this form was incidental and temporary, and would have ceased as soon as the condition was fulfilled. "The obligation of the law under this consideration," says Dr. Owen, "ceaseth when we come to the enjoyment of the reward. It obligeth us no more formally by its command, Do this and live, when the life promised is enjoyed. In this sense, the Lord Christ was not made subject to the law for himself, nor did yield obedience unto it for himself. For he was not obliged unto it by virtue of his created condition. Upon the first instance of the union of his natures, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, he might, notwithstanding the law that he was made subject unto, have been stated in glory. For he that was the object of all divine worship, needed not any new obedience to procure for him a state of blessedness. And had he naturally, merely by virtue of his being a creature, been subject to the law in this sense, he must have been so eternally, which he is not. For those things which depend solely upon the natures of God and the creature, are eternal and immutable. Wherefore, as the law in this sense was given unto us, not absolutely, but with respect unto a future state and reward; so the Lord Christ did voluntarily subject himself unto it for us, and his obedience thereunto was for us, and not for himself."* I may subjoin to these answers to the objection, that it cannot be consistently advanced by those who acknowledge the representation of Adam, and believe that, although he was subject to the law on his own account, and bound to obey its precepts for himself, yet, if he had fulfilled the terms of the covenant, his descendants would have been entitled to the promised reward on the ground of his obedience. If his obedience could have been considered as virtually the obedience of his posterity, there is evidently no reason why the obedience of Christ should not have been accepted on the behalf of his people, and have entitled them to the reward promised in the covenant of grace, even although it were true that he was himself personally bound to perform it. The will of God was sufficient to establish a relation between the acts of the representative and the represented, in the one case as well as in the other.

In the second place, I proceed to observe, That the Father required from our Surety satisfaction for the sins of his people. When a covenant is broken, the promise made by the other party is no longer binding, and the penalty, if there be one, is inflicted. Hence man, having failed to perform the stipulated obedience, became subject to the curse; and the justice of God demanded the execution of it. There were only two ways in which he could escape his righteous doom; either by an act of mercy on the part of his Judge remitting the punishment, or by the substitution of another person, who should bear it in his room. To the first method were opposed the purity and rectitude of the Divine nature, which holds sin in abhorrence, and will not permit it to pass with impunity. The second was therefore adopted. Let it be here observed that, while the claim of the law to a full compensation for the wrong which it had sustained was established, there was in the present case a relaxation of its severity, by the admission of a substitute. It is evident that its original sanction required the punishment of the transgressors. "In the day thou eatest thereof," the law said to Adam, "thou shalt surely die,† and not another for thee;" and on this ground he and all his descendants might have been called upon to answer, each for himself. The law itself does not know a substitute, and would not admit one. It was owing, therefore, to a gracious dispensation of the Lawgiver that Jesus Christ was constituted the Surety of sinners. The sovereign will adopted this expedient as the only one by which our ruined race could be restored, and the glory of all his perfections could be displayed in our salvation. As the execution of the penalty upon the actual transgressors, would have involved them in total and irretrievable perdition, a substitute was appointed who was able to bear it. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all."‡ The satisfaction of Christ was an eminent part of the condition of the covenant, and is mentioned as such in several places of Scripture: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin," or rather, "when his soul shall offer a sin-offering, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."‖ The condition enjoined is, that he should be an expiatory sacrifice; and the promise is, that he should be rewarded with immortal life, and the redemption of his spiritual seed. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."§ He who was perfectly immaculate could be made sin only by imputation; which does not imply that he was polluted with sin, or accounted an actual transgressor,

* John ix. 4, 5. † Ib. viii. 29.

* Owen on Justification, chap. xii. † Gen. ii. 17.
‡ Isa. liii. 6. ‖ Ib. 10. § 2 Cor. v. 21.

but merely that he was made answerable for the sins of those whom he had undertaken to represent. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."* The curse is the sentence dooming the transgressor to punishment; and Christ was made a curse, by being subjected to that sentence, in consequence of his voluntary assumption of the office of a Surety.

How, it may be asked, could the sufferings of Christ be satisfactory for the offences of others? We acknowledge in this case a relaxation of the law; but does it not defeat the ends of justice? It is not, perhaps, sufficient to say, that he was legally one with them; for, although this is true, and was necessary to his suffering in their room, he was in reality a totally different person, and his sufferings were not literally theirs. If the ends of justice had required that the transgressors of the law should undergo the penalty in their own persons, it is plain that Christ would have died in vain, because substitution could not have been admitted. But, if it was only required that compensation should be made to the law for the injury which it had sustained, the sufferings of Christ might be available for us, as we see in the case of a debtor whose creditor is fully satisfied by the payment of the surety, although the debtor himself should be forever insolvent. The death of Christ, in consequence of his superior dignity, established, still more than the death of the guilty would have done, the authority of the law, and fully demonstrated that its precepts are just as well as holy: that its penalty is not a vain threatening, but that between sin and punishment there is an inseparable connexion; that God is righteous, and shall not be disobeyed with impunity. This is all that would have been accomplished by the execution of the penalty upon sinners themselves, and all that was necessary to uphold the moral government of God. There was a mixture of grace in this dispensation; but it did not set aside, or in any degree impair the rights of the law.

But how, it may be asked again, could the sufferings of Jesus Christ satisfy for the sins of "a great multitude which no man can number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues?" The common answer is, that the transcendent value of his sufferings was the consequence of the dignity of his nature; and it seems to be sufficient. His sufferings were limited in degree, because the nature in which he endured them was finite; but their merit was infinite, because the suffering nature was united to the Son of God. An idea, however, seems to prevail, that his sufferings were the same in degree with those to which his people were liable; that he suffered not only in their room, but that *quantum* of pain and sorrow which, if he had not interposed, they should have suffered in their own persons through eternity; and so far has this notion been carried by some, that they have maintained that his sufferings would have been greater or less, if there had been one more, or one fewer to be redeemed. According to this system, the value of his sufferings arose, not from the dignity of his person, but from his power. The use of his Divine person in this case, was not to enhance the merit of his sufferings, but to strengthen him to bear them. If this is true, it was not necessary that he should have taken human nature into personal union with himself; it was only necessary that he should have sustained it; and this he could have done although it had subsisted by itself. That the sufferings of the man Christ Jesus were greater than those which a mere mortal could have borne, will be readily granted; but, although it does not become us to set limits to Omnipotence, yet we cannot conceive him, I think, considered simply as a man, to have sustained the whole load of Divine vengeance, which would have overwhelmed countless myriads of men through an everlasting duration. By its union to himself, his human nature did not become infinite in power; it was not even endowed with the properties of an angel, but continued the same *essentially* with human nature in all other men. Nor is the supposition which we are considering, at all necessary; for as, in virtue of the union, the sufferings of his human nature were the sufferings of the Son of God, they acquired an incalculable intensity of value, and were equivalent to the sufferings of all his people, as his obedience was equivalent to the obedience which they were bound individually to perform. The will of God determined their degree, and the dignity of his person imparted a worth to them above all price. This view of the subject does not occur, I believe, in some of our Theological systems, and in our popular books; but I persuade myself that it is just, and is preferable to the loose declamatory expressions which we often hear with respect to the greatness of his sufferings.

I have now shown you what was the condition of the covenant of grace. It included the obedience of our Surety to the precepts of the law, and his satisfactory sufferings. These constitute his *righteousness*, by which we are justified; a term of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, which signifies his perfect conformity to the law, in all its demands.

I now proceed to speak of the promises of the covenant. They are distinguished into two classes; the one including the promises which immediately respected Christ himself; and the other, the promises which respect his elect.

In relation to Christ himself, God promised to furnish him with all necessary preparation for the arduous work which he had undertaken to perform. The promise of a human nature in which he might fulfil the law, is referred to in the following words, which were formerly quoted: "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me;"* and it was performed when the power of the Highest overshadowed the blessed virgin, and the holy thing which was born of her was called the Son of God. The promise of the holy and supernatural endowments by which that nature would be fitted for the discharge of its duty, is thus expressed by the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord."† In the writings of the same prophet, our Saviour himself describes, in figurative language, his preparation for his office by the power of his Father:—"The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; and said unto me, "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified."‡ These promises were performed by the abundant communication, the communication not by measure, of the Holy Ghost in his graces and gifts, of which there was a visible sign at his baptism, when the Spirit descended like a dove, and rested upon him.

Again, the father promised to support him in his work. It was a work attended with such difficulties, that created power, although unimpaired by sin, would have been totally inadequate to it; and it was to be performed in human nature, which had failed in an easier undertaking, even when possessed of untainted

* Gal. iii. 13.

* Heb. x. 5. † Isa. xi. 2, 3. ‡ Ib. xlix. 1—3.

innocence, and of faculties in all their freshness and vigour. Our Saviour was encouraged by the assurance of the Divine presence and assistance: "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.—He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.—I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, and for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."* Accordingly we find him firmly depending upon these promises on the most trying occasions. The Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."† In the spirit of unshaken faith, when his enemies were conspiring against him, and his few friends were about to forsake him, he said to his disciples, "Behold the hour cometh when ye shall be scattered, every one to his place, and shall leave me alone; but I am not alone, for the Father is with me."‡

It is evident that these promises were not suspended upon the condition of the covenant, like those which will be afterwards mentioned, and may therefore be considered as belonging to the covenant only in this sense, that it was solely with a view to it that they were made. From their nature, some of them anticipated all obedience upon the part of our Surety, and instead of being the reward of his services, were intended to assist and encourage him in performing them. The only stipulation implied in them, was that, if Christ should undertake the work of our salvation, his Father would provide him with the means of accomplishing it; and they are properly expressive of the share which he would take in the execution of the plan that he had devised in concert with his Son.

Once more, The Father promised to confer a glorious reward upon his Son, and this promise manifestly depended upon the performance of the condition. Under this head, we may consider, first, that, when his work was finished, he should be invested with honour and power: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth." "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."‖ These promises were performed after his resurrection from the dead, when God gave "him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."§ We may consider, in the second place, the promises which respected the salvation of his people; for this is an eminent part of his reward, as it was with a design to accomplish their salvation that he suffered and died: "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."¶ Such would be the happy result of his propitiatory sacrifice. Having triumphed over death, he should behold a numerous offspring arising in all ages to call him blessed, and rejoicing in the invaluable benefits which he had purchased for them with his blood: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."**

I proceed to speak of the promises which immediately respect the elect. I begin with observing, that they were made in the first instance to Christ, with whom alone God transacted in the covenant of grace. In every case which admits of a representative, the other party addresses himself to him, either in proposing the terms, or in stipulating the reward. Hence it is plain, that the promises were made to our Surety; and it is farther evident from the consideration, that the persons, in whose favour they were to be performed, had then no actual existence, as the transaction took place before the foundation of the world: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."* If eternal life was promised before the creation, it follows that it was promised to Christ, who was then constituted the federal head of his people. It was promised to him, not simply as a divine person, but as sustaining a public character, and standing in an intimate relation to those whom he was appointed to redeem; and therefore, the promise may be considered as virtually made to them, on whom the blessing will be bestowed at the stated season, and in the proper order.

Eternal life comprehends all the blessings of the covenant of grace. The Scriptures make mention of it as the great end of the incarnation and sufferings of Christ: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life."† It is emphatically represented as *the* promise, to denote not merely its pre-eminence, but its comprehensiveness: "This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."‡ By reflecting upon the subject, you will perceive that all the blessings of grace and glory are included in it. The enjoyment of it is not confined to the future state; it commences in this world, when the believer not only obtains a title to immortal happiness, but is illuminated, and sanctified, and comforted by the Spirit of grace, and it will be perfected in the world to come. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."‖

It will be proper to take a distinct view of the blessings promised to the elect; and not to multiply particulars, I shall content myself with the following summary.

First, The Father promised to regenerate the elect. When the covenant was made with Christ in their name, they were considered as persons dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from the life of God, unwilling to return to him, and incapable of faith, by which alone an interest in the righteousness of the Surety is obtained. In this state they are when the gospel is preached to them, and its grace is first displayed by infusing into their souls a principle of spiritual life: "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts."§ In consequence of this promise, the Holy Ghost enters into them, and, by his almighty power, effects that change which we call regeneration, and which is the commencement of a new life of holiness and peace. It appears from their state prior to this change, that the performance of the promise precedes all qualification, and all dispositions preparatory to the reception of the grace which it communicates.

Secondly, The Father promised to forgive their sins. This blessing consists in the repeal of the sentence, which was pronounced upon them as transgressors of the law, and annuls the obligation to suffer the penalty, so that they are as safe as if they had not offended. It,

* Isa. xlii. 1, 4, 6, 7. † Ib. l. 7. ‡ John xvi. 32.
‖ Ps. cx. 1. Ib. lxxxix. 27. Ib. lxxii. 8. § Phil. ii. 9—11.
¶ Isa. liii. 10. ** Ps. ii. 8.

* Tit. i. 2. † John iii. 16. ‡ 1 John ii. 26
‖ Ib. v. 11—13. § Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10.

therefore, holds a distinguished place among the blessings of the covenant; "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." It was procured by the atonement of Christ, which satisfied the demands of justice, and is enjoyed by those on whom his blood is sprinkled, or who obtain by faith an interest in his propitiatory sacrifice. It is a comprehensive blessing, which has a retrospective and a prospective influence; for not only is the guilt of their past and present offences cancelled, but they are secured against the imputation of the guilt of such sins as they may afterwards commit: "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.*"

Thirdly, The Father promised to sanctify the elect. This blessing is virtually comprehended in the promise of regeneration, which we have already considered; for "the writing of the law upon their hearts" signifies, at least, the communication of the first principles of holiness. The seed thus sown by the hand of God, he waters and cherishes, that it may bring forth fruit in abundance: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."† When Paul prayed that the Thessalonians might be "sanctified wholly," and that their "whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,"‡ he rested his hope of an answer upon the faithfulness of God in the performance of his promises: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."‖ Holiness is an essential ingredient in the eternal life, which is the great blessing of the covenant, and it is necessary to prepare us for the pure enjoyment of the heavenly state.

Fourthly, The Father promised to preserve the elect in a state of grace, from which they would fall if they were left to themselves: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."§ This promise consists of two parts. First, God engages not to forsake them, for his affection is not mutable and transitory, like that of men, but he rests in his love. Hence he says in another place, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."¶ Secondly, he puts his fear in their hearts, that they may not forsake him. Their faith may be feeble, but it shall not utterly fail; their holiness may lose its lustre, but it shall not be extinguished; sin may occasionally prevail against them, but it shall not recover the dominion. There is a spark under the ashes, which the breath of heaven will kindle into a flame; there is a living principle which, protected from danger, and cherished by secret communications from heaven, will acquire full vigour and activity in a better world. "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up to everlasting life."**

Lastly, The Father promised to glorify the elect. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."†† This promise includes many particulars; a happy death, a blessed resurrection, a public justification at the tribunal of Christ, admission into heaven, and the fruition of unbounded and never-ending felicity. When the promise is performed to all whom Christ has redeemed, the design of the covenant will be fully accomplished; and the Mediator having delivered up the kingdom to the Father, or brought to a close the administration over which he presides, "God will be all in all."*

There are several other points relative to the covenant, upon which your time will not permit me to enter at present, and I shall therefore reserve them for another Lecture.

* Rom. viii. 1. ‖ Ib. 24. ** John iv. 14. †† Isa. xxxv. 10. † Ezek. xxxvi. 25. § Jer. xxxii. 40. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 23. ¶ Isa. liv. 10.

LECTURE L.

ON THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

Farther Observations on the Promises of the Covenant—The Covenant of Grace admitted of no Penalty—The Administration or Dispensation of it committed to Christ—View of it as a Testament—Dispensation of the Covenant before and subsequent to the coming of Christ.

Having pointed out, in the preceding Lecture, some of the promises which were made to Jesus Christ, as the Representative and Surety of his people, I proceed to make a few general observations upon them.

The first observation is, That they originated in the love of God. They are varied expressions of it; diversified aspects which it bears towards man, considered as guilty, polluted, and miserable; and the ultimate design of them is his restoration to purity and happiness. In them, God is manifested to be love. They are the overflowings of his heart towards his fallen offspring, and awaken a more impressive sense of his infinite benevolence, when we view them in connexion with the wonderful expedient which has been adopted that his goodness might have access to us, all the promised blessings being conveyed by the substitution and sufferings of his Son. "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light."†

The second observation is, That the promises bear a relation to Christ, not only because they were made primarily to him, but because the performance of them was suspended upon his fulfilling the condition of the covenant. A question has been agitated among Theologians, whether, as they express it, the promises were founded on the offices of Christ; that is, in more intelligible language, whether it was owing to his mediation that the promises were made? This may be considered as one of those subtle questions which have been brought forward to exercise ingenuity, and furnish a subject of debate, without being of much practical utility. In the usual manner, Divines have arranged themselves on opposite sides, some affirming and others denying. By those who are accounted orthodox, it has been judged agreeable to truth to maintain, that they were not founded on the offices of Christ, but were perfectly free and voluntary on the part of God, proceeding from his infinite goodness. This is undoubtedly true; but one thing is certain, that when they were made to Christ, he was considered as the representative of his people, who was to fulfil the righteousness of the law in their name, and that not one of them would have been made, if he had not condescended to assume this character. It is also certain that all the blessings contained in the promises were purchased with his blood, which was the price of our salvation. For all the blessings of grace and glory we are indebted to his mediation. Hence God is said "to bless us with all spiritual blessings in Christ,"‡ or for his sake. As the life which was promised in

* 1 Cor. xv. 28. † Ps. xxxvi. 7—9. ‡ Eph. i. 3.

the first covenant, would have come to us through the obedience of Adam, so the eternal life promised in the second covenant is the gift of God, through the obedience of his Son.

The third observation is, That the promises of the new covenant are free. In explaining this particular, it is necessary to attend to the distinction of absolute and conditional. By an absolute promise, is meant a promise which will be performed without respect to any qualification possessed, or any work done by the person to whom it is made. The performance of it depends exclusively upon the faithfulness of the promiser. In this sense, some of the promises are absolute; and I may quote as an example the first promise, formerly mentioned, which stands at the head of all the rest, in the list given by an Apostle, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."* It is evident that nothing in the sinner, prior to regeneration, can be a reason for imparting to him a principle of spiritual life; for while he is in the flesh, or a state of natural depravity, he cannot please God. To grace he is indebted for the communication of the Spirit, and not to the earnestness of his prayers, and his diligence in the use of the means. I request you to observe, that on this subject there is a want of correctness in the language which is frequently employed. There is a way of talking of absolute promises, as addressed to sinners in the Gospel, which, although it recommends itself to the inattentive, by seeming to exalt the grace of God, is not agreeable to truth. As an absolute promise must without fail be performed, it would follow, that, if the promise of regeneration, which is suspended upon no condition, was made to sinners without distinction, they should all, at one time or another, be brought into a state of salvation. The conclusion is unavoidable; but as none of us would choose to acquiesce in it, we must reject the premises, and hold that this absolute promise is not addressed to sinners in general, but to the elect alone, or rather, is a sort of promissory prediction of what God purposes to do in reference to those who were redeemed by his Son. If there are any other absolute promises—and in this class may be reckoned the promises of the unchangeable love of God to his people, and of the constant inhabitation of the Holy Ghost in their souls—they are made to persons who are in covenant with God by faith. No absolute promise can be made to a sinner, simply considered as such. Other promises suppose some qualification of the person to whom they are made, or some work to be done by him before these are performed. Such promises some call conditional; but if condition is understood to mean that which gives a just title to the promise, we must say, that all the promises of the covenant of grace are unconditional, there being no such thing as merit of any kind, even in the saints. If, however, the term merely signifies something which precedes the enjoyment of particular blessings, it must be acknowledged that many of them are conditional, although the use of this term ought to be avoided. The remission of sins is not promised to every man, but solely to him who believes; nor eternal life to persons of every description, but to those alone who are pure in heart, and persevere to the end. Yet even those promises are free; because, if faith and holiness are previously required, those qualifications are the subject of other promises, which absolutely depend upon the faithfulness of God. They are resolvable into the promise of regeneration, which we have seen is absolute, with respect to the elect. God, therefore, when he demands certain qualifications in men, as necessary to the performance of particular promises, must be considered merely as settling the order in which the blessings of salvation shall be communicated. The enjoyment of some must precede the enjoyment of others. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also calls; and whom he calls, them he also justifies; and whom he justifies, them he also glorifies."* In short, however dear it cost our blessed Saviour to accomplish our salvation, upon us it is bestowed "without money and without price." The whole building is of mercy; the hand of God is displayed in its commencement and its completion; and here, as in the second temple of the Jews, "the headstone thereof shall be brought forth with shoutings, Grace, grace unto it."†

When I stated the parts of which a covenant consists, I remarked that a penalty is frequently added, to be inflicted if one of the parties shall fail. Thus, when the covenant of works was made with our progenitor, and abstinence from the fruit of the tree of knowledge was enjoined as the condition, God said to him, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." There was no penalty in the covenant of grace, because Jesus Christ, our Representative could not fail; and his indefectibility arose from the mysterious constitution of his person. He was a man, but not a mere man, for he was at the same time the Son of God. As all creatures are capable of change—and the highest have changed, as we know from the conduct of those angels who kept not their first estate—in a covenant made with a mere creature, however pre-eminent in nature and endowments, a penalty is introduced with propriety. But our blessed Saviour being immutable in his Divine person, and the human nature being established in a state of holiness by its union to him, a penalty could have no place in a federal transaction in which he was concerned. Let it not be imagined that this statement is contradicted by the fact that sufferings were inflicted upon Christ. In these, I acknowledge, a penalty was executed; but it was the penalty of the covenant of works, to which he submitted as an essential part of the condition of the covenant of grace. If it were the condition of a covenant which one man made with another, that the latter should engage in laborious services, or expose himself to danger, or endure pain, it would be absurd to call his cost and trouble a penalty, which is totally distinct from the condition, and can have no place till the covenant is violated. Christ suffered penal evil; it was not, however, inflicted for any failure on his part, but submitted to as the means of establishing the covenant, and obtaining for his people the promised reward.

As there was no penalty in relation to the Surety, so there is none in relation to his people, for this obvious reason, that he fulfilled the covenant for them, and completely established their right to the promises. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."‡ It is acknowledged that there are threatenings addressed to those who have entered into the covenant by faith, to deter them from disobedience, and that these are executed when they transgress. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."‖ These visitations may indeed be called penalties or punishments, but usually receive the milder character of chastisements, because they are inflicted by the hand of God, not as an avenging Judge, but as a merciful Father; and are not intended for the destruction, but for the good of the sufferer. They are not penalties, in the common acceptation of the term, for a penalty is the evil of pain, to which a person is sub-

* Heb. xiii. 10.

* Rom. viii. 30. † Zech. iv. 7. ‡ Rom. viii. 1.
‖ Ps. lxxxix. 30—32.

jected for a crime, and is designed to satisfy the law by a just retribution. But it is not satisfaction to justice which is the object of the afflictions of believers; the intention of them is, both to testify that sin is displeasing to God, and to lead them to repentance and amendment. Severity is mingled with love: "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."* Their afflictions may, therefore, be considered in the light of blessings, and as connected with the promises of the covenant, because they are subservient to their sanctification and final happiness. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."†

Having given you a view, at considerable length, of the covenant of grace, I now proceed to speak of what has been called the administration of it, but might be more correctly called the dispensation of grace, which is founded upon it.

I begin by observing, That the blessings of the covenant are committed to our Saviour, that he may distribute them according to his own will, and the will of his Father, which in this as in every other matter perfectly harmonize. This honour has been conferred upon him, that the blessings which were purchased with the infinitely valuable price of his blood should be at his disposal, and that sinners should be reminded of their unspeakable obligations to him, by receiving every good thing immediately from his hands. This constitution is agreeable to our notions of fitness and justice; for the fulfilment of the condition of the covenant gave him a right to the promises, and put him in full possession of their inestimable treasures. Accordingly, after his resurrection he told his disciples, that "all power was given to him in heaven and in earth;‡ evidently meaning, that it was given to him in consequence of his sufferings and death. Long before, the holy Psalmist, looking forward in the Spirit of prophecy, had said, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."‖ His words are explained by those of Peter to the Jews, who were filled with astonishment at the miracle of Pentecost: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."§ Three things are observable in these words; that the gift of the Holy Ghost to our Saviour was the performance of a promise made to him by his Father; that the promise was performed after his ascension; and that the Spirit was given to him, that he might pour him out upon men like the rain which falls upon our fields. Our Lord himself has assured us, that he has received "power over all flesh" from his father, "that he may give eternal life"¶ to his peculiar people; and in the following words he teaches us, that upon this donation is founded the dispensation of grace, which was established by his authority, and will be carried on to the end of the world. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father."** Hence follow the gracious invitations and promises of the Gospel: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."†† This important truth is more distinctly expressed in the following passage. "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended upon high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of the body in love."*

In explaining the administration of the covenant of grace, it is remarked by Theological writers, that, in relation to men, it assumes the form of a testament, or a deed by which a person bequeaths his property to his heirs, to be enjoyed by them after his decease; or that its blessings are conveyed to us in a testamentary form. By some of them, much importance is attached to this view of the subject, and they illustrate it at great length, and with a minuteness of detail, tracing the metaphor and similitude in this, as in other instances, to every point of resemblance which a lively fancy can suggest. Accordingly, they tell us of the testator, the legacies, the legatees, and the executor. The testator is Christ himself; the legacies are the blessings of salvation; the legatees are sinners; and the executor is also Christ, who differs in this respect from a human testator, that, although he died to confirm his testament, he rose again, and is now alive to carry it into effect. Particulars of this kind may arrest the attention of the multitude, and obtain their approbation and applause; but they exhibit a Divine dispensation too much in the shape of a human transaction, and tend to degrade it by the association of low and familiar ideas. One reason that some Divines enlarge upon this view of the covenant, is, that, in their opinion, it is calculated to exhibit, to the greatest advantage, the freeness of its administration; for a testament, they say, is a deed of grace, without conditions properly so called. But this is a mistake; for, although men do commonly make a free conveyance of their property in their latter will to their heirs, they sometimes burden it with conditions, upon the performance of which the enjoyment of the property depends. It is not, therefore, from the testamentary form of the covenant, that the freeness of its administration can be justly inferred, but from other circumstances unconnected with this view of the subject. It does not therefore follow, that those who do not approve of this view are enemies to the doctrine of grace, although some of them may have been so, because that doctrine may be more successfully maintained upon different grounds. With respect to the assertion, that the legatees of this testament were sinners in general, I question whether it is perfectly accurate. A legatee of an unconditional testament has an undoubted right to the property bequeathed to him, and nothing but injustice can prevent him from enjoying it. His right is complete by his nomination in the testament; it is not necessary that he should come forward and claim the inheritance; it is the business of the executor to put him in possession of it. Were all men the legatees in the testament of Christ, all men would be entitled to salvation, and without any effort on their part to attain it, would infallibly be saved. But those who call them the legatees, mean nothing more than that by this deed salvation is offered to them, and will be bestowed upon all who accept of it; and at the same time they call this an unconditional testament. Their

* Heb. xii. 6. † 2 Cor. iv. 17. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 18.
‖ Ps. lxviii. 18. § Acts ii. 32, 33. ¶ John xvii. 2.
** Matt. xi. 27. †† Matt. xi. 28.

* Eph. iv. 8, 11—16.

ideas are confused and contradictory; for if none shall obtain the inheritance but those who claim it by faith, it is evident that, in a qualified sense the testament is conditional, and that, in strict language, the only legatees are believers. If these observations are just, it will follow, that the view of the testament which is given in some systems and treatises on the covenant of grace, is incorrect. The following statement of a late writer is, in my opinion, more agreeable to truth. "As the promissory part of the covenant respecting the elect was, by the dying Redeemer, turned into a testament, it necessarily follows that the legatees can be none other than those to whom the promises were originally made by the Father; the promissory part of the covenant regulating the testamentary. To whomsoever the promises were made in Christ, to them, and to them alone, are the promises made by him (in the Gospel,) otherwise his promises would be more extensive as to their objects than his Father's are; that is to say, he would promise eternal life to them to whom the Father never did; a doctrine not to be readily admitted, as neither agreeing with his delegated authority, nor with his fidelity in promising. For, if eternal life be bequeathed to all, how is it bestowed on so few?"

"The covenant of grace," says our Confession of Faith, "is frequently set forth in Scripture by the name of a testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the Testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed."* We have already seen, that, by the covenant of grace, the confession means a transaction between God and men themselves, in which "he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation through Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved."† The word testament does often occur in our translation, and it has been remarked, that the original term διαθηκη signifies both a testament and a covenant. Its primary meaning is "testament;" but in Scripture it frequently occurs in the sense of συνθηκη. You have seen that, by our translators, it is sometimes rendered "testament" improperly, and that "covenant" should have been preferred, as when Christ is called the Mediator and the Surety of a testament; characters to which no distinct idea can be affixed. I believe that there are many other passages in which "covenant" should have been substituted for "testament;" and I am not sure that there is more than one passage in which the latter word should be used, namely in the two following verses of the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."‡ Attempts have been made to shew, that even here the word "covenant" should be used; but as they seem to be forced and unnatural, I abide by the common translation, and admit that, in this instance, the Apostle, taking advantage of the double meaning of διαθηκη, alludes to it in the sense of a testament. But he alludes to it, I apprehend, not to lead us into a train of speculation upon the new covenant as converted into a testament, and into all the details of such a transaction, but merely to illustrate the subject which he was discussing, the necessity and the effect of the death of Christ. The idea of a testament was suggested by the mention of the eternal inheritance in the preceding verse. As an inheritance is conveyed from one person to another by a testament, this designation may be given to the covenant of grace, because it conveys to us the inheritance of eternal life, and conveys it in virtue of the death of the Surety. It was with the covenant of grace as it is with a testament.

As the death of the testator is necessary to render a testament valid, so the death of Christ was necessary to ratify the covenant, and to make its promises sure to his spiritual seed. It is the necessity of the death of Christ which the Apostle intended to establish, and the notion of a testament is incidentally introduced solely for the purpose of illustrating the point. Salvation comes to us through his death, as an inheritance comes to the legatees through the death of a testator. I do not positively affirm that this is the only passage in which διαθηκη should be rendered a testament; but I am persuaded that the propriety of this translation is more apparent here than in any other place; and, although I will not presume, in opposition to a formidable array of Theologians, to discard this view of the covenant of grace, yet I cannot help thinking that it rests upon a slender foundation, that undue importance has been attached to it, and that it has been dwelt upon with unnecessary prolixity.

In speaking of the administration of the covenant of grace, we must consider it as carried on under two distinct economies, of which the one preceded, and the other is subsequent to the coming of Christ in the flesh.

That there was a dispensation of grace prior to the coming of Christ, is evident to every person who reads the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It commenced immediately after the fall, when the first intimation of mercy was made, and continued till the death of our Saviour, when it was formally abolished. That it was virtually the same with the present dispensation, and differed from it only in form, may be proved by a variety of considerations. The exhibition of the seed of the woman as the ground of hope to the guilty, was the preaching of the gospel to our parents in paradise; and the same object was pointed out to the patriarch in subsequent revelations, and to the Jews by their typical institutions and the voice of the prophets. Hence the mission of Jesus Christ is represented as the fulfilment of the ancient predictions. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began."* The Apostle Paul affirms that the gospel which he was employed in preaching, had been published long before to Abraham, and that those who believed it, were admitted to a participation of the same privileges with the patriarch: "The Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham."† The covenant established with him was virtually the same covenant, which is still established with believers; for it contained the great promise, in which all other blessings are involved, that God would be a God to him, and to his seed after him; and it is called by an Apostle, "the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ,"‡ that is, the covenant of grace. The unity of the two dispensations, notwithstanding their apparent discrepance, is manifestly implied in the following words: "God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son."‖ The substance of the revelation is the same, although the persons by whom it was communicated were different.

I request your particular attention to the two following passages, from which it appears, that the dispensation under which the ancient church lived, was connected with the covenant of grace, being founded

* Conf. c. vii. § 4. † Ib. § 3. ‡ Verses 16, 17.

* Luke i. 68—70. † Gal. iii. 8, 9.
‡ Ib. 17. ‖ Heb. i. 1.

on the atonement of Christ, by which the covenant was ratified. "Him," says Paul, "God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."* Remark the expression, "the remission" or passing by "of sins that are past." These, it is acknowledged, are the sins which were committed in the ages prior to the manifestation of Christ. God passed them by, or remitted them in the exercise of his forbearance; he was gracious to the guilty persons, and received them into favour, although no expiatory sacrifice of sufficient value had yet been offered for them. How was it consistent with his justice to do so? This difficulty is removed by the mission of the promised Redeemer, who has made an atonement of infinite value, the virtue of which reaches back to the beginning of time, and forward to the end of it. In exercising mercy towards those who lived before his coming, God had a respect to this atonement, and he acted towards them like a creditor, who lets his debtor go free, although payment has not yet been made by his surety, because he has full confidence in him, that he will fulfil his engagement. The other passage is in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in quoting it, I shall correct our translation by substituting covenant for testament, which in our version is twice employed improperly. "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."† The transgressions which were under the first covenant, were the sins of the peculiar people of God under the covenant of Sinai, the sacrifices offered for which could deliver them only from the temporal penalties of the law; yet many of them obtained the full pardon of their sins, so that God did not enter into judgment with them, either in this life or in the next, on the ground of the great sacrifice which was to be offered in the fulness of time. Christ was the Mediator of the new covenant for the redemption of those sins, or assumed this character that he might expiate them, and actually did so by the shedding of his blood. Hence it appears that those, who lived under the law of Moses, were saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as those who live under the gospel.

Our Lord may be considered as sustaining the office, and performing the duties of a Mediator before his incarnation. It is not a vain opinion of the Jews, that it was the second Person of the Trinity, who gave the promise of mercy to our first parents in paradise, appeared to the patriarchs, published the law from Sinai, conducted the church in the wilderness, and managed its affairs during the ages which followed. It is certain, that a Divine Person did often appear under the ancient economy, and as there is no reason to think that it was the Father, whom no man has seen, we conclude that it was the Son, who assumed the form of that nature in which he was after to sojourn upon earth. He was the Angel of God's presence, and the Angel of the covenant, concerning whom these three particulars are worthy of attention; that he was a Divine Person, for the name of God was in him, and the power of pardoning or not pardoning sin belonged to him; that he acted in an official capacity, for he was an angel or messenger; and that his office was connected with the gracious dispensation which was then established, for he was the Messenger of the covenant. As far as that dispensation was carried on by revelation of the Divine will, we are expressly assured, that it was under his direction and superintendence. It was the Spirit of the Messiah, Peter says, "who testified beforehand" in the prophets, "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."*

The administration of the covenant, during this period, was carried on, as we have seen, by personal appearances of the Son of God, by the ministry of the prophets, by the miraculous and sanctifying operations of the Holy Ghost, and by the various institutions which God gave to the church. Sacrifices were offered soon after the fall; and as they could not be suggested by reason, nothing seeming to be more unnatural than to propitiate the Deity by the blood of the lower animals; and as, if they had been a human invention, they would not have been acceptable to God, we must believe, that they were appointed by himself, to prefigure the oblation of our Saviour, and to direct the faith and hope of mankind to him, for deliverance from the curse. The sacrifices of the Jews were enjoined, and every thing respecting them was regulated by Divine command. It is an error to consider the ceremonial law merely as intended to guard them against idolatry; and still farther from the truth, to imagine that several of its rites were borrowed from heathen usages; an opinion which is derogatory to its honour, and besides, is incapable of proof, the practices of the Egyptians, in which the resemblance is traced, being known to us only by Greek authors, who, living a thousand years after the death of Moses, were as ignorant of the state of matters in his age, as we are. The legal institutions, says an Apostle, "were shadows of things to come, but the body is of Christ."† His meaning obviously is, that such a representation was given by them of Christ, his office, his sacrifice, and its effects, as is given of a man by the projection of his shadow; a representation which shews the outline, or general form, but does not exhibit his features. The information communicated to the people of God, was obscure and imperfect; but still there was a revelation which sufficed "for the time then present," as it enabled them, through faith in the promised Redeemer, to obtain eternal salvation. Some degree of light was thrown upon the figures of the law by the prophecies, which became clearer and clearer, as the time drew nearer for his manifestation in the flesh.

"The Old Testament," says the seventh article of the Church of England, "is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament, everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man. Therefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises." Although there is no express mention of eternal life in the law of Moses, yet it was implied, as our Saviour has shown, in the declaration, that God was the God of the patriarchs; and, we are assured by an Apostle, that "they desired a better country, that is, a heavenly."‡ This hope was retained by their descendants, who also looked for an inheritance beyond the grave, of which Canaan was a type. Although the law was much enforced by temporal rewards and penalties, these were not, and could not be, its only sanction, since God was related to the Israelites, as well as to us, as their moral Governor and Judge; and, if there was a dispensation of grace, it must have held out the same blessings to be enjoyed, and the same consummation to be expected, which are exhibited in the promises of the gospel. Accordingly, it is certain that, as believers under the ancient economy were justified by faith, and were favoured with the presence and consolations of the Holy Ghost, so they looked for perfect and eternal salvation in another state of existence. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. My flesh and my heart

* Rom. iii. 25. † Heb. ix. 15.

* 1 Pet. i. 11. † Col. ii. 17. ‡ Heb. xi. 16.

faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."*

The administration of the covenant, since the coming of Christ, is a subject so well understood, that it may be passed over with a few observations. The gospel makes known to us the eternal counsel between the Father and the Son, displays the riches and freeness of Divine grace, offers salvation to all who hear it, and comforts believers by its promises of present and future blessings. All the other ordinances are channels by which the benefits which Christ purchased are communicated. In particular, baptism and the Lord's supper sustain a peculiar character, being sacraments or seals; that is, sacred institutions of Divine appointment, in which, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers. The design of them is to declare, that the persons to whom they are administered, are in covenant with God, have a right to its blessings, and shall obtain the everlasting inheritance; that so their faith and hope may be confirmed, and they may be excited to perform that obedience which God requires from those whom he has admitted into his friendship.

The present dispensation is distinguished from the past by the superior clearness of its manifestations. What was formerly exhibited under the veil of types, is now openly revealed. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." All the information is given which is suitable to our present condition, and which our minds are at present capable of receiving; and, in consequence of the difference between the twilight of the law and the bright day of the gospel, the people of God far excel their predecessors in the measure of their knowledge: so that the Baptist himself, who enjoyed greater advantages than the prophets, is surpassed by the meanest member of the Church, who is illuminated by the Spirit. Again, it is distinguished from the former dispensation by the more abundant influences of the Spirit. An Evangelist having remarked that Jesus spoke of the Spirit, which they who believed in him should receive, adds, "For the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified;"† not meaning that he had not been given at all; but that he had not yet been given in that fulness of his influences, which was enjoyed when our Lord ascended to heaven, and the Christian dispensation commenced. God promised in the latter days, or in the days of the Messiah, "to pour out his Spirit upon all flesh," and the gospel is called the "ministration of the Spirit." Hence, as there is now greater light, there is also greater liberty. The people of God, in ancient times, being under tutors or governors, to use the words of Paul,‡ though sons, differed not from servants; but now they are sons freed from every restraint, and in full possession of their privileges. The different states of mind arising from the two dispensations, are pointed out in the following words: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."‖ Lastly, the present dispensation is distinguished from the past by its extent; the one having been confined to the nation of Israel, at least after the formal separation from other nations, at the time of the Exodus, but the other embracing as its object the whole human race. Hitherto it has not been universal; but its limitation has not arisen from its nature, as was the case with respect to the Jewish economy, nor from any express prohibition, but from the inactivity of Christians, and from the secret arrangements of Providence, which fixes the times and the seasons for accomplishing its own designs. "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," was the command of Christ to his Apostles; and ere long, God will have respect to his covenant, the covenant which he made with his Son, and "will give to him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession."

The great design of the administration of the covenant of grace, is to impart its benefits to those for whom they were intended. It is accomplished by the preaching of the gospel, in which salvation is offered to sinners; and by the power of the Spirit, who works faith in the hearts of those who were chosen in Christ to eternal life. It is only by faith that we can obtain an interest in the covenant; agreeably to the solemn declaration, "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."* As the descendants of Adam came under the obligation of the covenant made with him, by successively entering upon existence; so men become connected with the covenant which was made with Christ, by being born into the world of grace.

It concerns every person, therefore, to inquire whether "God has made with him an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." It is an inquiry intimately connected with his eternal welfare, for by this covenant alone salvation can be enjoyed. How shall this important point be ascertained?

First, He who has entered into covenant with God, is a convinced and awakened man; for, although its benefits are offered to all, none but those who feel their need, will accept of them. Peace with God, which the covenant has established, will be prized and sought by those alone, who, conscious of guilt, dread his displeasure and vengeance. By the secure and careless world, the proposal of reconciliation is disregarded. Conviction of sin, by the application of the law to the conscience, is the first step in the process, by which men are excited to take hold of God's covenant, that they may make with him. Secondly, He who has entered into this covenant, "has fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before him."† This is a description by an Apostle, of those who have an interest in the promises, and in the strong consolation which flows from them. They have fled from the wrath of God, which pursued them according to the tenor of the first covenant, to the Mediator of the second, whose blood speaks better things than the blood of Abel. In the next place, He who has entered into this covenant, has founded his hope of salvation upon the righteousness of Christ, by which it was fulfilled. If this was the condition of the covenant, he alone who consents to it, can have any right to the promises; those who go about to establish their own righteousness, in vain expect to enjoy its blessings, and are guilty of an impious attempt to disannul the eternal agreement between the Father and the Son. This is the tendency of the doctrine of the merit of good works, in the mildest form in which it can be proposed. Allow that they are performed by the assistance of grace, and that nothing is required but sincere obedience, still it is a new condition, totally different from the original one. The admission of any thing, however qualified, even of faith itself, as the ground of our acceptance, is subversive of the covenant of grace. The notions of some men may be confused, and their expressions inaccurate, while the exercises of their hearts are humble and evangelical; they may seem to trust in their own righteousness, while before God they renounce it as utterly insufficient; but, if there is any man who distinctly and deliberately depends upon it, as he betrays the spirit, so he is under the authority of the old covenant which ministers condemnation and death. "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse."‡ Lastly, He who is in covenant with God,

* Ps. lxxiii. 24, 26. † John vii. 39. ‡ Gal. iv. 2.
‖ Rom. viii. 15.

* Mark xvi. 16. † Heb. vi. 18. ‡ Gal. iii. 10.

is a holy person; for this, we have seen, is its first promise: "I will put my laws in their minds, and in their hearts will I write them." It found him a sinner, but it has made him a saint. Its design, to re-unite men to God in the bonds of friendship, could not be accomplished without the sanctification of our nature; between which, in its unregenerated state, and a Being of infinite purity, there is a mutual repugnance, and communion is impossible. The promises of the covenant not only furnish motives to obedience, but hold out that aid by which the people of God are enabled to perform it. And it is the character of believers, that they do not rely upon their own powers, and attempt to serve God in their own strength, but depend upon his grace, which works in them both to will and to do; and that they ascribe to him all the praise of their success.

To the man who perceives in himself those evidences of his interest in the covenant, we may say, 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured of the Lord, the Lord is with thee. Thy sins are pardoned, and thy immortal welfare is secured; happy art thou, and it shall be well with thee. "The lines are fallen to thee in pleasant places; yea, thou hast a goodly inheritance; for God is the portion of thy cup."* Tossed and afflicted thou mayest be in this sinful world, but thou shalt not perish, for the covenant is sure and everlasting. The price of thy redemption is paid. Eternal life is thine by right, and, ere long, it shall be thine in possession. The power which created all things, and upholds them, will protect thee from dangers; and the truth, which is more stable than the everlasting mountains, is pledged to realize thy hopes. "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me." '†

LECTURE LI.

ON THE MEDIATORIAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

A Mediator between God and Man necessary—General Observations on the Office of Mediator—Christ's Qualifications for the Office—Reconciliation to God, the effect of Mediation—In what nature Christ is Mediator—He is not Mediator for Angels—Commencement and Duration of his Office.

THERE was not a Mediator in the first covenant, because man being in a state of innocence was acceptable to his Creator, and having a pure conscience, was not disturbed by those terrors which haunt his guilty descendants, and make them recoil from intercourse with the Just and Holy One; yet, it was condescension on the part of God, to enter into a federal transaction with his own creature to whom he owed nothing, and whose obedience he might have demanded, without stipulating any reward; and by making a covenant with him, he lessened, as it were, the natural distance between them, and put a veil upon his glory, the full spendour of which, even a spotless being could not have been able to endure.

Since the introduction of sin, the necessity of a Mediator has been generally felt and acknowledged. It was a consciousness of their own meanness, and unworthiness to approach the Supreme Being, the Lord of heaven and earth, which first gave rise to the idolatry of the Gentiles. Conceiving the celestial bodies to be animated, dazzled by their splendour, and believing that they had nearer access to the Deity, and greater influence with him than the inhabitants of this inferior region of the universe, they paid religious homage to them, in the hope that through their patronage, they should be recommended to the notice of the Father of all. In process of time, they imagined an order of invisible beings, to whom the office was assigned of carrying the prayers of men to the Gods, and bringing commands and blessings from the Gods to men. "God," says Plato, "does not mingle in familiar intercourse with mortals, but all intercourse and conversation with him are maintained by means of demons," as those fancied beings were called. They conjoined with them those persons who had been distinguished upon earth by their virtues and illustrious achievements, and were exalted to the rank of demi-gods after their death.

Moses was the mediator of the covenant which God made with the Israelites at Sinai, and hence the law is said to have been given "by the hand of a mediator."* The interposition of a third person between that people and the Lawgiver was soon found to be necessary. The appearance of JEHOVAH amidst blackness, darkness, and tempest, filled the whole camp with alarm, and his voice issuing from the midst of devouring fire, so terrified them, that they said to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."† How could they but tremble, in whose ears his holy law was proclaimed, and whose consciences told them that they had often transgressed it! The mediation of Moses consisted in his acting as an *internuncius*, or messenger, between God and the Israelites. God did not speak again to them with an audible voice; Moses published his commands; and as he spoke for God to the people, so he spoke for the people to God, presenting to him their promises and vows, and requests.

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant, and the office as sustained by him, is to be understood in a higher and more perfect sense. He is not merely a prophet, who has spoken to us in the name of God, and an intercessor who recommends our petitions to him, but, by the sacrifice of himself, he has removed the obstacles which prevented our friendly correspondence; and while by his death he reconciled God to the guilty, by the influence of his grace upon their hearts, he reconciles the guilty to God.

A Mediator is one who intervenes between two parties at variance, and makes peace. The original word is μεσιτης, which signifies, ὁ μεταξυ δυο ων, *qui medius inter duo stat, vel est.*‡ Unitarians, consistently with their principles, understand it to mean simply a messenger, a person sent by God to declare his will and his promises. But, although it does not admit of a higher sense in its application to Moses, it signifies much more when Christ is designated by it, as will appear, I trust, from what will be said in this lecture, and from the subsequent illustration of his priestly office. The word Mediator does not occur in the Old Testament, except in the translation of the Seventy, who render these words in Job, "Neither is there any days-man (an old word for *umpire*) between us, that might lay his hand upon both,"‖ in the following manner, Εἰθε ην ὁ μεσιτης ἡμων, και ελεγχων και διακουων ανα μεσον αμφοτερων, "I wish that we had a mediator attentively hearing and judging between both." The Hebrew מוכיח, is a *judge* or *arbiter*, employed in settling a dispute, and deciding who has the right side of the question. The passage refers rather to an umpire than a mediator.

The necessity of the mediation of Christ, arises from the existence of sin; which being contrary to the nature and the will of God, renders those who have committed it obnoxious to his displeasure. As they

* Ps. xvi. 6. † Ps. lxxxix. 34—36.

* Gal. iii. 19. † Exod. xx. 19.
‡ He that stands, or is, a middle person between two.
‖ Job. ix. 33.

had no means of appeasing his anger, the interposition of another person was requisite to atone for their guilt, and lay the foundation of peace. This is the great design of his office; but it extends to all the acts, by which sinners are actually brought into a state of reconciliation, are fitted for holding communion with God, and are raised to perfection and immutable felicity in the world to come. It comprehends the particular offices which our Saviour is represented as sustaining, the prophetical, the sacerdotal, and the regal; and it is by executing these that he completely performs the duties, and realizes the character of a Mediator. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* These particular offices will be afterwards considered in their order. In the present lecture, I shall confine myself to some general observations. My purpose is to inquire what are the necessary qualifications of a mediator between God and man, and to shew that they are all found in Him, to whom this character exclusively belongs.

In the first place, a Mediator is necessarily a different person from either of the parties whom it is his design to reconcile; he can neither be the party which is offended, nor the party which has given the offence. The party offended may forgive the offence; but in this case a mediator is not wanted, so far as he is concerned. The party offending may be sorry for his conduct, and earnestly desire that peace may be made; but he may have no access to the party offended, or the latter may reject his advances, because he does not deem the proffered satisfaction to be adequate. In this case, a third person must interpose to adjust the difference, by the proposal of terms in which both will acquiesce.

It will be said, How could Jesus Christ be a Mediator, since it is certain that he was not in a state of neutrality, but was the party offended, being one with the Father and the Spirit? for, if we hold the common doctrine of the Trinity, which teaches that all the Divine persons subsist in one undivided essence, we must believe, that they were all displeased at the sin of man, and that the penalty denounced upon him had the sanction of their common authority. It is acknowledged that, according to this view, he whom we call Mediator must be considered as Lawgiver and Judge, and that, instead of expecting him to interpose in our favour, we had every thing to fear from his vengeance. Have we not reason to believe that it was he who appeared in paradise after the fall, and pronounced the doom of the whole human race upon our guilty progenitors? But let us remember, that the Scriptures introduce us to the knowledge of an economy or arrangement among the persons of the Godhead, by which different characters and offices are assigned to each, and new relations are sustained by them towards one another, and towards us. The law, for the violation of which we are condemned, is the law of the Father. He appears in the character of the Supreme Governor of heaven and earth. It is against him that the offence has been committed; it is his justice which demands the punishment of the guilty; and with him remains the power to extend mercy to them, and to prescribe the terms upon which it will be exercised. The Son having resigned, if I may speak so, those prerogatives to the father, (resigned them, I mean, for this special purpose,) has assumed a different character. He does not pursue the claims of justice against sinners, but stands forth as their friend, to rescue them from their perilous situation, and to give such satisfaction as their offended Sovereign may demand. Thus in this economy, he is distinguished from the Father, and is as closely related to us as the surety is to the person for whom he has become responsible. But, although between him and men an intimate connexion subsists, he is not one of them, considered as offenders; such union would have totally disqualified him for his office. A partaker of their nature, and even of its infirmities, he was perfectly free from that pollution with which it is stained in every other individual. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,"—so separate that he could approach to God in their name, and was looked upon by the Holy One with entire approbation. This point will afterwards come under our notice.

In the second place, A mediator must be independent, and master of himself. He must possess full ability for the duties of his office, and a full right to exert that ability in whatever way the design of the office may require. If it be necessary, in order to effect a reconciliation, that he should give satisfaction by sufferings and death, it is evident that he must have absolute power over himself; because those who are subject to the authority of another, cannot dispose of themselves and their services without his consent. Hence we perceive that, in the present case, a mere creature could not have been mediator, because something was required which a creature was not at liberty to give by his own spontaneous deed. Angels and men are the property of the Creator, which cannot be alienated without sacrilege. They must wait his command before they venture to engage in any enterprize not comprehended in the original law of their nature. In particular, it should be considered that the life of man is his gift, and is not to be thrown away or surrendered, whatever good might be anticipated from the sacrifice, without the permission of the Giver. And here we may remark, that the substitution of one life for another, could not be justly admitted by a human government, for this obvious reason, that what the substitute had no right to give away, his superiors could have no right to accept. That the offer was voluntary, would not alter the case, because mere willingness and moral power are two things totally different. As our life is not our own, so our faculties are instruments with which we are furnished for the service of our Maker; and the exertion of them for any purpose not commanded or permitted, is a waste or an abuse, for which we are reprehensible. We may not trifle with our happiness, although it may be thought, that if we choose to suffer we are unwise, but not criminal; for it flows from the Divine bounty, and as it should be thankfully received, so it should be carefully preserved, and only parted with when duty calls, and an act of self-denial is demanded for the glory of God. Into the office of Mediator between God and man, which required the sacrifice of ease and life itself, no mere creature, although otherwise qualified, (which, however, was impossible,) could have intruded without presumption. He had not the requisite power, the power to lay down his life, and the power to take it again. But this power belonged to Jesus Christ, who was indeed bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and, if he had possessed no higher nature, would not have been a fit person to mediate between heaven and earth; but, while the Scripture traces his human genealogy, and calls him the son of David, it is careful to inform us that he was also the Son of God. As a Divine person, he was not under the control of superior power, he was subject to no law, by which his activity was confined to a particular sphere; he might interfere wherever his wisdom and benevolence pointed the way. He could stoop from his dignity, and draw a veil over his glory. Having assumed our nature, he might employ it as the instrument of accomplishing any service which would promote the designs of the Divine government, and the interests of the human race. He might present it as a pure oblation to

* 1 Tim. ii. 5.

his Father, and give his blood as the ransom of our souls.

In the third place, A mediator must be a person who has great influence over both parties; he must possess the means and the power to terminate their mutual aversion, and unite them in the bonds of peace. It is not the interference of any person which will effect a reconciliation: he must be one who can conduct the business with prudence, and adjust the difference to the satisfaction of both parties. In the present case, the negotiation could be successfully carried on only by one in whom both could confide, and who had such interest with both, that to use language employed on such occasions among men, they would be disposed to attend to his proposals. The object of the interposition was to bring together, upon amicable terms, God and men, between whom sin had caused a mutual alienation; to remove displeasure on the one hand, and aversion on the other, and to restore an intercourse founded in love. The necessary qualification was found in Jesus Christ; "Him the Father heareth always;" to his requests he never fails to lend a favourable ear. What would he refuse to a Son, who is the brightness of his glory, and whom he always loved; to a Son, who has shed at the foot of his throne blood more precious, not only than that of bulls and goats, but than the blood of the noblest and the holiest of the human race; a Son, who has so faithfully and honourably finished the work assigned to him, notwithstanding the most formidable difficulties; a Son, who submitted to humiliation, and sorrow, and death, that he might exalt the character of his Father, and give the highest manifestation of his glory to the universe? There was not another in heaven or on earth who had such claims to be heard, when he came forward to intercede for the guilty. To the interest which upon these grounds he possesses with the offended Lawgiver, no limits can be assigned. Infinitely acceptable to Him, both as his own Son, and as our Advocate, he may ask what he will, and it shall be granted to him. God will not retain his anger against those whom one so high in favour has taken under his protection, and recommends to his approbation. His influence with the other party, whose consent is necessary to complete the reconciliation, is equally great. What power is he not able to exert upon them by means of his word, which casts down high thoughts and proud imaginations, and leads captive the willing mind? What can they refuse to a person of such dignity, who condescends to solicit them? How irresistible are the claims of his blood! How attractive is the display of his grace! If these motives should prove ineffectual to dispel their prejudices, and conquer their aversion, he has access to the springs of motion in the heart. He can send the Holy Spirit to persuade with gentle but irresistible efficacy; who, by a manifestation of wrath and of mercy, of the hopelessness of a contest with the Almighty, and the happiness flowing from his favour, leads them humbly to supplicate peace, and to accept the offered reconciliation with gratitude and joy.

In the fourth place, A mediator between God and man must be capable of suffering. The design of his office is to make reconciliation; and as God would not pardon sin without satisfaction to his justice, the design could not be accomplished unless the mediator would submit to the penalty; for only upon this condition would the offended Lawgiver receive them into favour. Had the redemption of man been merely an act of power, like the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, the Son of God might have effected it without assuming our nature, and descending to a state of humiliation. But it was a moral work, which was to be conducted in conformity to the principles of the Divine government, and to terminate in a full display of its rectitude and purity. We need not here discuss the question, whether God could have pardoned sin without an atonement. Although we should venture to affirm that he could—and surely it is a venture which ill becomes beings of such limited views—it would be sufficient to know that he would not, as appears from the event; for hence it follows, that the qualification which we are considering, was indispensably necessary to a mediator. The Scriptures, upon the one ground or the other, represent the death of Christ as essential to the plan of our redemption, and ascribe our reconciliation to it: "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."* It is an obvious corollary from these premises, that the Mediator must be a creature, for a creature alone can suffer; the Divine nature is impassible and immortal; its felicity is independent and immutable. But there is probably a great diversity of intelligent beings. We know of two orders, the human and angelical; and it may be asked, whether an individual of either might have assumed this office, or whether there was any reason why he should be exclusively a man? The answer is obvious. The Mediator must be a man, because, being a third person acting between two parties, with a view to reconcile them, he would not have been qualified for his undertaking if he had not possessed the nature of both. But there are two other reasons connected with the necessity of his sufferings. First, if he must undergo the penalty denounced upon the objects of his mission, an angel could not have been our substitute, because he might be annihilated, but could not die in the sense of the law; the death which the law threatened, being the separation of the soul from the body, while his nature is spiritual and uncompounded. Secondly, the expiation of sin must be made in the nature which sinned. The identity of nature seems to have been indispensable to the ends of justice. If a man dies for men, we see a cause of righteous retribution; but nothing of this kind would have appeared if the burden of human guilt had been laid upon an angel. This doctrine is taught in the following words: "Forasmuch then as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."† The reason of the incarnation is assigned in the next verse: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham."‡ The word rendered, by the aid of a supplement, "he took on him the nature," is επιλαμβανεται, from a verb which signifies *to take hold of*, and *to help*: "Verily he did not help angels, but he helped the seed of Abraham," and for this reason he took part of our flesh and blood, and not of the spiritual nature of angels.

In the fifth place, A mediator, the design of whose office is to reconcile God to the guilty, must himself be free from sin: "Such an high priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners."‖ Would a man, who was himself a rebel, and whose presence would rouse the indignation of his prince, be a proper person to be employed in soliciting the pardon of his brethren in guilt? The perfect purity of the Mediator was necessary to the acceptance of his services. The law made men priests who had infirmity, and needed to offer first for their own sins, and then for the sins of the people; and the character of the ministers, as well as the nature of the sacrifices, rendered the service unavailing to the expiation of moral guilt. Again, the purity of the Me-

* Rom. v. 10.
† Heb. ii. 14, 15.
‡ Ib. 16.
‖ Ib. vii. 26.

diator was necessary to the fulfilment of that part of his office, which consisted in giving us an example that we might walk worthily of the state of reconciliation; and that this example might answer its design, it must be absolutely perfect. It must be one which we may implicitly imitate, without doubt and without danger of going astray. Once more, the Mediator between God and man is a source of sanctification, according to the saying of the Evangelist: "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."* But how could we derive this blessing from him, if he were not himself perfectly holy? How could we be enlightened by him, if he were not light? When the angel announced his birth to the virgin, he said, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."† This primitive purity he retained during the course of his life, conversing and familiarly associating with sinners, but not learning their ways. He died, indeed, as a criminal, but he died for sins not his own: he "suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."‡ Nay, he was not only free from actual transgression, but he was incapable of sin; so fortified against temptation, that he could not be seduced. It was an eternal covenant which God intended to establish by his ministry; a covenant which should not be broken like the first. The first Adam was created in the image of his Maker, but his holiness was not an inalienable possession. Had the second Adam resembled him in mutability, the hopes of mankind might have been disappointed once more; and the remedy proving insufficient, the case would have been desperate. But he stood firm in the severest trial. No argument, however subtle, could perplex his reason; no solicitation, however powerful, could seduce his affections. Satan exhausted his arts in vain, and in vain did the world display its glories before him; neither promises nor threatenings, neither flattery nor reproach, could excite a wandering thought, or an irregular desire. The Mediator has, therefore, accomplished the design of his office. By his immaculate sacrifice, the covenant is confirmed, its promises are sure to his spiritual seed, and there is no condemnation to those who believe in him. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?"‖

In the last place, A mediator must be a person to whom men may have free access, that they may place confidence in him, and enter without fear into his communion. The design of his office would be defeated, if his character were repulsive, and his conduct were such as to keep them at a distance. They must be encouraged to throw themselves into his arms, to commit themselves to his protection and guidance, to entrust him with their most important concerns. It is by first gaining our confidence and persuading us to connect ourselves with him, that he brings us back to God, from whom we have revolted: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."§ That he is one whom we may humbly approach, and in whom we may hope, is evident from these considerations. First, although, in one of his natures, he is exalted far above us, and above angels, who, in comparison with him, are less than nothing and vanity; yet on the other, he is nearly related to us, our kinsman and our brother. It is a human voice which gently says, "Fear not, I am he that liveth and was dead."* Secondly, he has felt our infirmities, and suffered our affliction, and may we not expect more tender, and more active sympathy, than if he had merely a speculative knowledge of our miseries? John refers to the first consideration, when he says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;"† and Paul points out the second as a source of consolation in these words, "In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."‡ Thirdly, we have express assurances that he bears a most tender affection to us. It would be nothing that he is a man like us, nothing, that he has experienced our sorrows, if we had not positive evidence that his love to us is real, constant, and infinite; for men are often hard-hearted to their brethren, and sometimes those who have tasted the evils of adversity appear not to have become more compassionate to others, but to have their feelings blunted and destroyed. But in Jesus Christ we find a heart which responds to the cry of distress, and a tongue which speaks a word in season to the weary. Love displayed in his life and in his death, and unchanged in his state of exaltation, invites sinners to approach, and assures them of a cordial reception: "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."‖

To the duties of his office, I have been led frequently to refer when explaining his qualifications. They will be particularly considered when we give an account of the several offices which are implied in the general one of Mediator. As Mediator, he is the representative of God to us, the image of the invisible God, the person in whom he is seen; and the light of the glory of God shines in his face. In consequence of the darkness which sin had spread over the minds of men, and the alienation of heart which it had produced, the knowledge of God was in a great measure lost, but it is restored by the revelation of which he is the Author: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."§ He has not only brought to light those doctrines which reason is supposed able to discover, but he has made known things which eye had not seen, ear had not heard, neither had it entered into the mind of man to conceive, the mysteries of the Divine nature, and the eternal counsels concerning human redemption, which had been hidden from ages and generations. It is owing to the mediation of Christ, that such a discovery has been made of the Divine character as is adapted to the present circumstances of man; which, instead of depressing, elevates him, instead of awakening fear, inspires hope and joy. We behold the Father in the face of the Son, and every feature is marked with benignity. The terrors of his majesty have passed away, and we conceive it possible that worms of the dust should hold communion with the Possessor of heaven and earth. The rays of the sun come to us through a cloud, which abates their dazzling splendour, and attempers them to the human eye. To the question of Solomon, "Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth?" we can answer, He will dwell with them; he has sent his beloved Son to re-unite them to himself in the bonds of eternal friendship.

This leads me to remark, that the Mediator has established that peace between God and man which it was the object of his office to effect. For this purpose, it was necessary, as I formerly intimated, that the efficacy of his mediation should extend to both

* John i. 16. † Luke i. 35. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 18.
‖ Heb. ix. 12—14. § John xiv. 6.

* Rev. i. 17, 18. † John i. 14. ‡ Heb. ii. 18.
‖ Matt. xi. 28. John vi. 68. § John i. 16.

parties; that he should reconcile God to men, and men to God. The reconciliation of God to us, by which I mean the appeasing of his anger, and the procuring of our pardon and acceptance, was accomplished by his sacrifice, which, by its intrinsic value, and the willingness with which it was offered, fully satisfied the demands of justice. The reconciliation of sinners to God, which consists in destroying their natural enmity against him, and inspiring love and confidence, is effected by the power of his grace. The consequence is, that God dwells in them, and they dwell in God. Peace on earth, and good will towards men, are the fruits of his mediation: "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."*

From what has been now said, it appears that he is the medium through which intercourse is carried on between heaven and earth. Through him the love of God descends upon us, and through him our prayers, and thanksgiving, and all our holy services, ascend to God. He obtains for us all spiritual blessings. They are granted in consideration of his merit, and in answer to his request; and they are not dispensed immediately by the Father, but pass to us through the hands of his Son. The fountain of Divine love has found a channel, in which it flows to refresh and gladden the souls of the guilty and unworthy. The heavens are opened; and peace, and righteousness, and salvation have come down to the habitations of mortals; "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them." In return, we present to him the sacrifices which he requires, of gratitude, praise, and obedience, accompanied with humble supplications for new communications of his goodness. Our services, being imperfect and mingled with sin, might be rejected; but the iniquities of our holy things were expiated by our merciful High Priest, and our oblations presented by him meet with a favourable reception, to which they are not entitled on their own account. His mediation is the basis of all acceptable religion; it gives us boldness to enter into the holiest of all. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

It appears that the duties of the mediatorial office are performed on earth and in heaven, as the High Priest of the Jews ministered both in the court, where the altars of sacrifice stood, and in the holy of holies. If it be inquired in what precise nature Jesus Christ is Mediator, I would say, that he executes the office in both natures, the Divine and the human. The Scripture characterizes him as the man Christ Jesus; but that man was united to the second person of the Trinity. Considered as Mediator on the part of God, he discharges his duty, it has been said, by his Divinity; for it is as God that he sends the Holy Spirit, reigns over the church, reveals the mysteries which none could know but he who is in the bosom of the Father, and performs other acts which imply sovereign authority and infinite power. Considered as Mediator on the part of man, he discharges his duty by his humanity; for it was as man that he died, rose from the grave, and ascended to heaven; as man that he took possession of heavenly glory in our name, and intercedes for us before the throne of his Father. But, in thus referring his mediatorial acts to their respective classes, we ought to be careful to avoid the affectation of accuracy, and not to lose sight of the personal union of his natures, in consequence of which they are one principle of operation in the work of redemption. Since the incarnation, both natures act together according to their peculiar properties. They are not confounded so as to make one nature, but, while they remain distinct, the person is one. Some things could be done only by one of them, as for example, the human nature alone could suffer and die; but the other is always to be understood as concurring with it. In the death of the human nature, the Divine co-operated, by a voluntary surrender of it to crucifixion, and by communicating such value to its sufferings, that they were an adequate atonement. It is only in the Divine nature that he can hold and exercise the supreme authority over all things, with which he is invested for the salvation of the Church; for it is manifest, that the Lord of heaven and earth must possess infinite knowledge, and wisdom, and power; but his human nature shares in this glory. It is seated at the right hand of God, far above all principalities and powers; and it will be the visible Judge in the great day, when all nations shall be assembled to receive their final sentence: "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory."* It is in the human nature that he has a fellow feeling of our infirmities, for it was as man that he suffered what we suffer; but his divine nature goes along with his human in pitying us, and is the source of the consolation by which we are supported.

The Scripture calls Jesus Christ the Mediator between God and man. Some have affirmed that he is also the Mediator of Angels, upon what authority they are best able to tell. The Bible does not say one word in their favour, and to dogmatize when it is silent, is surely to intrude into things not seen. All are agreed that he is not the Mediator of fallen angels, and an Apostle expressly assures us, that "he did not help them," and therefore did not assume their nature. Another informs us, that, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down into hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;"† that is, he placed them in very different circumstances from those of men, who were condemned as well as they, but not by an irreversible sentence; whereas angels are consigned to a state of hopeless misery. He determined from the beginning to admit no negotiation on their behalf. The peace having been broken, was never to be restored. He has exhibited in their doom an awful example of severity, which will no doubt be productive of important consequences in the moral administration of the universe. The reason of this distinction between two classes of rebellious creatures we do not understand; but while we see justice taking its course upon the one, and grace extended to the other, with what intense feelings of gratitude should we extol and magnify Him, who so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son for its redemption! It is, then, of good angels that Christ is said to have been Mediator; and if you inquire in what way he could sustain this character in relation to beings, who, having never transgressed, had no need of his interposition? you will be told that he was not a Mediator of redemption to angels, but of preservation and confirmation. It was owing to him, that when others fell they stood, and by him such stability was given to the righteousness with which they were created, that they shall never lose it. If this doctrine be admitted, man will seem to have been hardly dealt with, who stood in as much need of such a Mediator as they, but not enjoying this benefit, yielded to temptation, and involved all his pos-

* Heb. viii. 10--12.

* Matt. xxv. 31. † 2 Peter ii. 4.

terity in misery. The sovereignty of God may be deemed a sufficient answer to this difficulty; but if we proceed to ask, what occasion there could be for a Mediator between God and innocent beings whom he loved, and upon whom he was ready to bestow every necessary blessing without solicitation? Whether the idea of a Mediator before any change had taken place in the original state of things, does not imply some imperfection in that state? and whether there is any thing in the constitution of our Saviour's person, and in the new covenant, which bears the most distant relation to angels? we shall not, I fear, receive a satisfactory answer. The truth is, that the opinion under review, is a mere conjecture, which does not receive the slightest countenance from Scripture; and when we go beyond the information which it gives, our speculations about angels are not more wise nor more worthy of attention, than the theories would be which in our idle hours we might form about the inhabitants of Saturn. The angels are said to be put in subjection to our exalted Redeemer; but this is very different from their being confirmed by him in holiness, and refers to a different period of their existence. They are said also,—if we understand them to be "the things in heaven,"—to be in him "gathered together in one," with the things on earth;* but the obvious and natural sense is, that they are united with the saints in one society, over which he presides. By him the enmity subsisting between angels and men was destroyed; for when men are reconciled to God, and renewed after his image, angels love them and minister to them, and will joyfully receive them into their everlasting habitations. There is no doubt that in consequence of the mediation of Christ the happiness of angels is augmented: the cause is not, that they were the objects of his mediation, or that as Mediator he did any thing with a direct view to their good, but that a new revelation was given of the Divine character and perfections which these holy beings contemplate with delight. Hence the joy which they expressed at our Saviour's birth: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will towards men." If there are any other holy beings in the universe, this effect is not peculiar to angels: for the glory of God in redemption will increase the felicity of all to whom it is made known.

There is a question which relates to the commencement of the Mediatorial office, and which it might be improper to pass without notice, because it gave rise to a great deal of speculation not long ago, in one of the bodies into which our Church was then divided. It so happened that I paid little attention to it at the time, and am not acquainted with the arguments which were advanced by the opposite parties; but the one contended that Christ did not become Mediator till his incarnation, and the other assigned an anterior date to his office. It is not a proof of the falsity of a doctrine, that it is held by persons many of whose other views are erroneous, because they who are often wrong, may sometimes be right. It will not, however, serve to recommend the opinion that the mediation of Christ commenced at his birth, to know that it is a doctrine of the Church of Rome, which has been condemned by Protestant Divines. Roman Catholics maintain that Christ is Mediator only as man, and therefore consider him as not having entered upon his office till he assumed our nature.

It is of importance to settle the meaning of terms, because when they are left vague and indeterminate, both parties may dispute with great vehemence, and seem to hold the most opposite creeds, while in reality there is no difference of sentiment. If by the mediation of Christ we mean his acts of humiliation, obedience, and suffering, we must say, that he became Mediator at his incarnation, because it was only in human nature that he could perform those acts. But, if we mean by his mediation, the whole of his agency in behalf of sinners, we must go back to the fall, and even into eternity, when the covenant was made between the Father and the Son. I can conceive some men who pride themselves in what they call metaphysical reasoning, (which, however, is often the working of a dark and bewildered mind,) to object that, as the Mediatorial office implies subordination, our Saviour could not sustain it while he remained, if I may so speak, in his pure Deity, unallied to an inferior nature. If there is any force in this argument, it will prove too much; for the legitimate inference from it is, that still he is Mediator only as man; a position contrary to the doctrine of our Church, and to the most obvious conclusions from Scripture.

Those who claim the character of orthodox, and particularly such of them as aim at systematic accuracy, and delight in nice distinctions, have sometimes need to be reminded of their own admonition to heretics, not to allow reason to intermeddle with matters of pure revelation. It is of no consequence what may be the result of our speculations upon the nature and fitness of things; our faith in every point ought to be determined by the oracles of God. Now, if we consult the Scriptures with simplicity of intention, resolved not to cavil but to learn, we shall discover not a few grounds for believing, that our Redeemer acted as Mediator prior to his coming in the flesh. We shall find him acting towards men in the name of God, and towards God in the name of men, as he has acted since his incarnation. It is a mediatorial act, the act of a prophet, to reveal the will of God; and who needs to be told that he was the author of revelation under the old as well as the new dispensation? The prophets were his ministers as well as the apostles; and accordingly the Spirit who spoke in them is expressly called the "Spirit of Christ."* And it appears that he is called his Spirit, not merely because he testifies concerning him, but because he was sent by him.† Again, it is a mediatorial act, to exercise authority over the people of God, and to give laws for the regulation of their worship, and of their conduct towards God and man. It is the belief of Jews and Christians, that it was he, and not the Father, who promulgated the law to the Israelites in the wilderness, and as this opinion is consonant to his own declaration, that no man has at any time seen the Father, the Son being his representative to mankind, so it is confirmed by the proto-martyr Stephen, who, speaking of Moses, says, "This is he that was in the church in the wilderness, with the Angel that spoke to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles to give unto us."‡ But we read of none who spoke to him at that time but God. "Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice."‖ Who then could this angel who is called Jehovah be, but the angel who assumed the same character, when he appeared in the burning bush, the angel to whom the power belonged of pardoning or retaining sin, a power completely divine? This angel was God; but the title of angel or messenger implies, that he was acting in subordination to another, and destroys the argument that he could not be Mediator, till he had united himself to a created nature. And surely there is no difficulty in conceiving a person to be officially subordinate to another, although in essence and original dignity he is his equal. To intercede for man is another act of mediation, which our Saviour performs in the heavenly state. In the first chapter of Zechariah, we find these words: "Then the angel

* Eph. i. 10.

* 1 Pet. i. 11. † Lecture xxxiii. p. 177. ‡ Exod. xix. 19. ‖ Acts vii. 38.

of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?"* It is most reasonable to think, that this was not a created angel, but the angel who spoke to Moses in Sinai, the second Person of the Trinity, to whom the administration of grace for the salvation of the church has been committed in all ages, and who was the immediate author of the ancient dispensation. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact mentioned in the preceding verses, that the messengers whom the Lord sent "to walk to and fro through the earth," and who evidently signify the ministers of providence, are represented as giving an account to this angel of the execution of their commission. Surely they did not give the account to a creature, but to God, in whose service they were engaged. I have only to add, that to deny that Christ was Mediator before his incarnation, leads to the denial of the existence of any covenant or transaction respecting our redemption till that period; because in that transaction he must have appeared as the friend and surety of man, and, according to the hypothesis, he could not become such till he had assumed a nature capable of subjection and obedience.

It may safely be inferred, I think, from these things, that the mediation virtually commenced before our Saviour was made flesh, and dwelt among us in a visible form. I admit that, till he descended to the earth, that constitution of person, which the office required, was wanting, and some of its most important duties could not be performed; but, to conclude that, therefore, he performed none of them, would be illogical, and contrary to the evidence produced. When he assumed the body which God had prepared for him, as he came to do the will of God, so he was in a condition to fulfil it in every particular, to obey, to suffer, and to die. At his baptism, he was formally invested with the office, or more accurately, he was publicly recognised as the Messiah; and he dedicated himself to the service of his Father, in the work of our salvation. The visible descent of the Spirit upon him, was a symbol of the ample qualifications with which his human nature was supplied, and a voice from heaven attested the Divine approbation: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

How long Jesus Christ will continue to discharge the duties of his office, is a question about which there is a diversity of sentiment. The common opinion is, that the office will be perpetual. It seems reasonable to believe that, as by him sinners are reconciled to God, and admitted into communion with him, he will be the medium of intercourse even in the heavenly state. With this idea those passages of Scripture are understood to accord, which represent him as a Priest for ever, as ever living to make intercession, and ascribe to him an eternal kingdom.† On the other hand it is contended, that the office may be conceived to cease when its design is fully accomplished; that our Saviour having been appointed Mediator to bring sinners to God, and to a state of perfection, there will be no cause that he should any longer sustain that character, when all the saints have been redeemed from the earth, and being not only justified, but free from the slightest taint of sin, will have no need of an intercessor, and may hold immediate intercourse with the Holy One. The Scripture appears to favour the idea of the termination of his office, by saying, that when the end comes he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and be subject to him, and that then God will be all in all."‡ Those who maintain the perpetuity of the mediation, besides being influenced by what they deem scriptural authority, are actuated by zeal for the honour of our Saviour, which seems to them to require that he should forever retain an office which has reflected so much glory upon him, and without which the happiness of the righteous could not be secured. Those who adopt the opposite opinion do not consider it as derogating from his glory in any degree, and persuade themselves that nothing can give a more exalted idea of his mediatorial character than to believe, that he has so perfectly re-united God and his sinful creatures, that his farther interposition is unnecessary. The work will stand upon the solid basis which he has laid, will need no repair, nor the constant care of the Architect to prevent it from falling into ruins. It is formed of such durable materials, and compacted with such skill, that it will last for ever. I have given you a general account of this controversy, but reserve the discussion of it to another opportunity, when it will again occur.

The wisdom which is displayed in the mediation of Christ, is worthy of the highest admiration. Human wisdom would have been confounded by the question, Who shall repair the breach between heaven and earth? Who shall engage his heart to approach to God, in the name of the guilty? A creature was too mean, and too weak, to undertake the arduous enterprise, and a Divine Person was too great, and too remote from us, to appear upon our side. The mediation is the work of Him who is wonderful in counsel, and who proposes the noblest ends and the fittest means.

What glory does the mediation reflect upon our Redeemer! Standing between heaven and earth, he conducts a negotiation, on which depend the interests of both. He stands alone; his own arm brings salvation, and of the people there is none with him. The work which he is performing, surpasses every other in its nature and consequences. To him are committed the care of the Divine honour, and the happiness of the human race, and by him are all things made new; human nature is raised from the ruins of the fall, paradise is regained, and the everlasting triumph of righteousness and truth over error and sin, is secured.

* Zech. i. 12. † Heb. vi. 20. vii. 25. Luke i. 33, &c.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.

LECTURE LII.

ON THE MESSIAH.

Predictions of the Messiah prior to the Appearance of Christ—Their Import—Evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.

We have seen that Jesus Christ is the Surety and Mediator of the New Covenant; and, in speaking of him in these characters, it was impossible to avoid references to the mysterious constitution of his person. This, however, is a subject so important, as to be entitled to distinct consideration, both because it is the foundation upon which the whole scheme of redemption depends, and because some men of corrupt minds have, in all ages, and in various forms, exerted themselves to overthrow it. But, before we enter upon it, it will be proper to attend to the notices which were given of the Saviour to the church prior to his manifestation in the flesh, and then to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah.

As God was not pleased to send his Son into the world immediately after the fall of our first parents, but to defer his mission till the fulness of time, it seemed good to his wisdom to give before-hand such information respecting him, as would support the faith and hope of his people, and enable them to know him when he should actually appear. It could not have been supposed that, in the ancient Scriptures, which

record the divine dispensations to the descendants of the patriarchs, and the other nations of the world, there would be no mention of an event more wonderful and interesting than the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires. We find, accordingly, that, as he is brought forward to view almost at the commencement of the sacred volume of the Jews, so it closes with a renewed prediction of his approach, and a delightful picture of the happiness which awaited our race, when "the Sun of righteousness should arise upon them with healing in his wings."*

The first notice of the Saviour was given on the afternoon of the day on which our first parents transgressed, and before they were expelled from paradise. It was included in the sentence pronounced upon their seducer; and while it foretold his destruction, implied a promise of their deliverance from his power. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel."† It is plain, that the person here announced was to be the adversary and the conqueror of the serpent, or the devil, who, by the instrumentality of that animal, successfully tempted our first parents, and that he was to be a partaker of their nature. It would be absurd to consider the passage as relating to the enmity which literally subsists between the serpentine race and ours; nor is there any reason to understand it generally of a hostility which would afterwards arise between them and the devil, with whom they had now joined in a confederacy against God. The seed of the woman denotes an individual, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom this designation is peculiarly applicable, because he has descended from her in a different manner from all her other posterity. In reference to him, an equivalent expression is used, when it is said, that, "In the fulness of the time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."‡ To be made of a woman, and to be the seed of the woman, evidently signify the same thing; and hence, we may conclude this to be the import of the prediction, that the future antagonist of the serpent would be conceived and born in a miraculous manner. He is not called the seed of the man, although he was as much a descendant of Adam as of Eve, and his genealogy is traced up to him in the third chapter of Luke, because he was not derived from him in the ordinary way. He is the seed of the woman in an exclusive sense, because his mother was a virgin.

The next notice of the Messiah was given to Abraham, when God said to him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."‖ It may be supposed that this promise may be understood in a lower sense, as foretelling the benefit which mankind would derive from his posterity, who were destined to be the original depositories of divine revelation, and from whom it was to be afterwards diffused over the various regions of the earth. But an apostle has shown us that it should be applied principally or solely to the Messiah. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."§ By this second notice, the people of God obtained some new information. It not only repeated what was already known, that the Messiah would be a man, a partaker of the same nature with the patriarch, but it farther taught, that he should be a Jew; because it was expressly said, that "in Isaac this seed should be called," or that he should spring from Abraham, not by Ishmael, but by Isaac. The nation was specified, in which he should appear; and as they were thus excited to look for him, his relation to them was the ground on which that system of typical services was established, which was afterwards introduced by the ministry of Moses.

The next prediction to which I shall direct your attention, is contained in the following words: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."* Although it is agreed among Christians, that the Messiah is the person to whom this prophecy refers, yet there is a difference of opinion with respect to the import of the name or title by which he is described. Some suppose that שילה, *Schiloh*, is derived from שלח,† which signifies to *send*, the final ה, *heth*, being changed into ה, *he*, and, consequently, that שילה, signifies *He that is sent*. In the Vulgate, it is translated *Qui mittendus est*, he who is to be sent. Our Saviour is elsewhere termed the angel or messenger of Jehovah, and often speaks of his mission in the New Testament: "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"‡ Others are of opinion, that it is a derivative of שלה,‖ which signifies *to be quiet or tranquil*; and that שילה, *Schiloh*, is the peaceable one, or the giver of peace; a character which is, with the greatest propriety, given to our Saviour, on account not only of the gentle virtues by which he was distinguished, but of the peace which he has happily effected between God and man by his mediation. It may be added, that, as his religion inculcates brotherly love, so it actually creates it in the hearts of his genuine disciples. Under its influence, in the figurative language of prophecy, "The wolf dwells with the lamb, and the leopard lies down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together."§ But, whatever is the true import of the title, as there is no doubt respecting the person to whom it belongs, the words now under consideration convey this additional information with regard to the Messiah, that he was to arise from the tribe of Judah, which should subsist as a distinct political body, till the time of his appearance. This prophecy will again come under review, in the subsequent part of the lecture.

I proceed to lay before you another passage in which the family is pointed out, which should have the honour of claiming him as one of its members. "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne."¶ I acknowledge, that there is nothing in these words themselves which would justify us in applying them to the Messiah, and that, without bringing the light of other parts of Scripture to bear upon them, they might be considered merely as a promise, that the royal authority, with which David had been invested, should descend to his children in a long succession. But, in the mind of a person who is acquainted with the Scripture, no doubt will remain that the fruit of David's body is that illustrious descendant, whom the Jews welcomed when he entered Jerusalem with this acclamation, "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."** There is a manifest allusion to the passage in the words of the angel who announced the birth of our Saviour to his mother. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of David for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."†† I may add the prediction of Isaiah. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment

* Mal. iv. 2. † Gen. iii. 15. ‡ Gal. iv. 4.
‖ Gen. xxii. 18. § Gal. iii. 16.

* Gen. xlix. 10. † Shalach. ‡ John x. 36. ‖ Shalah.
§ Is. xi. 6. ¶ Ps. cxxxii. 11. ** Matt. xxi. 9. †† Luke i. 32, 33.

and with justice from henceforth even for ever."* The seventy-second Psalm begins with a prayer of David for himself and his son; but Solomon, if he thought of him at all, immediately vanishes from his mind, and he goes on to describe, in the sublimest strains, the future glories of the Messiah's reign. This is the king to whose manifestation the prophecies directed the attention of the Jews, and under whose administration they were taught to expect that substantial and unfading felicity, of which earthly things were only a shadow. And as he was the Son of David by way of eminence, and was appointed to sit upon his throne, he sometimes receives in prophecy the name of that monarch, of whom he is the antitype. "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."†

Having seen that, in his human nature, the Messiah was to be a member of the family of David, we shall find, in the following prophecy, something still more specific. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."‡ The Messiah would be a miraculous child, born of one of the daughters of David, according to a peculiar law. The miracle consisted, not in the exertion of extraordinary power, but in the manner of his conception; for the difference between a miracle and a common event is, that in the latter the hand of God is concealed from superficial observers by the means which it employs, whereas, in the former it is openly revealed. The birth of every child is effected by the same power which formed the body of our Saviour in the womb of the Virgin Mary; but in the latter case, it strikes us more, because it is unaccompanied with the usual circumstances. Omnipotence appears unveiled, and admiration is excited by the naked display of it.

It will be proper to inquire into the reason of this miracle; and we feel desirous to know how it came to pass, that the human nature of our Saviour was so different from that of all other men, in its perfect exemption from moral impurity. The common opinion is, that its holiness was the consequence of his being born of a virgin; and it is explained in the following manner. Let us look back to the introduction of sin, and attend to the way in which it is propagated. In consequence of the federal relation between Adam and his posterity, his sin is chargeable upon them, and is transmitted to them as they successively come into existence. The nature which they derive from him is corrupt. They are at once guilty and polluted. From this law of transmission there has been no exception since the beginning of the world. The individuals of the human race have been distinguished by important differences in their talents, their dispositions, and their actions; but all have been tainted with sin, because they have all borne the same relation to that one man, with whom they were appointed to stand or fall. He was the representative of his natural posterity, or of all who should descend from him in consequence of the blessing pronounced upon the man and the woman: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." In the representation of Adam every person was included, who was to be born according to the law of generation then established. Had our blessed Lord been born according to the same law, he also would have partaken of the general corruption; and being himself a sinner, would have been disqualified to be the Saviour of sinners. Now, the design of his miraculous conception was, to secure the innocence of his human nature, that it might be fitted for the high honour of union to his divine person, and for the holy services which were to be performed for the salvation of men. He was born of a virgin, that he might be an immaculate child. He was derived from Adam in a new channel, by which depravity could not be transmitted.

But it is a more satisfactory view of the subject to consider, that the miraculous birth of our Saviour was the consequence of a promise made after Adam had ceased to be a federal head, the promise, namely, respecting "the seed of the woman." He was not related to Adam while he continued the representative of his descendants, and was not, therefore, subject to the effects of his fall. His relation to him, if I may speak so, was incidental and conditional, depending upon the failure of Adam to fulfil the terms of the covenant. Christ was one added to the human race, after it had been brought into new circumstances, and he was not therefore bound by the law under which it was originally placed. It was not by an act of power in his miraculous conception, but by an act of justice, that he was exempted from the common depravity. He had no connexion with its cause; he was not more included in the representation of Adam than the angels of heaven; he would not have been born at all, if the covenant had not been broken; and that it is not our simple descent from Adam, which is the reason of the corruption of our nature, but our relation to him as our federal head, is evident from this consideration, that only his first sin is imputed to us, and all his subsequent sins were charged upon himself alone.

This I consider as the true account of the purity of the human nature of our Saviour. It was not owing simply to his being born of a virgin, although this is commonly assigned as the cause, but to his not being included in the representation of Adam. But all were included in it who were derived from him by the ordinary mode of continuing the species; and hence it was necessary that, in order to distinguish him, our Lord, who never was in Adam as a federal head, should descend from him in a miraculous manner.

We have seen that the notices of the Messiah in his human character, became clearer and more particular in every stage; but the ancient church was favoured with still more ample information. His divinity was the subject of revelation, as well as his humanity, in a variety of passages. I shall mention in the first place, the prophecy which we have just now considered, and in which, after it is foretold that he should be born of a virgin, it is added that his name should be called Immanuel. This is a compound Hebrew word, which signifies "God with us." It is not meant that he should actually bear this name, but that he should be what it imports. Accordingly, he never was called Immanuel by any evangelist or apostle; but he truly was God in our nature, manifested for our salvation. His divinity was also declared in the following words: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."* He is a child, and the mighty God; born, yet possessed of eternal existence. To the same purpose is this other prediction; "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and judgment in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness."† The original word is JEHOVAH, which is the incommunicable name, and, being applied to our Saviour, intimates that he is the living, self-existent one. Let it be observed that, while this passage asserts his divinity, it points out the inestimable benefit which would accrue to mankind from his manifestation in their nature, as through him they should obtain the

* Is. ix. 7. † Hos. iii. 5. ‡ Is. vii. 14.

* Is. ix. 6. † Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

blessing of justification, and by his obedience many should be made righteous.

It would be tedious to refer to all the notices of the Messiah which are contained in the Old Testament. As I have laid before you predictions and declarations respecting his person, so I might proceed to collect testimonies to the whole work which he would perform, to his humiliation, his sufferings, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his power, the progress and final triumph of his religion. But, passing these, I observe, that an expectation was excited of a great deliverer, who would appear in a future age to accomplish the redemption of the people of God. He was known by various titles, as the Redeemer, the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts, He that should come, and the Messiah. This last title signifies the anointed one, as *Christ* does in Greek; and was given to him to denote his divine appointment to his office, and his qualifications for it. In ancient times, the pouring of oil upon them was a rite used in the consecration of kings, priests, and prophets. In allusion to it he is called the Messiah, because he was set apart to the office of Mediator by God himself, and was endowed with all the gifts and graces which were necessary to the performance of its duties. Hence he is said to have been anointed with the Holy Ghost, whom God gave not to him by measure. The notions entertained by the Jews at the time of his manifestation, were exceedingly erroneous. They seem to have lost sight of his divinity, and to have imagined that he would be a mere man. They had overlooked the prophetic descriptions of his sufferings, and fixed their attention upon the splendid imagery in which his triumph was announced; they waited with impatience for the advent of a great temporal monarch, and were ready to march under his banners to victory and glory. Their misapprehension of his character was not owing to the obscurity or ambiguity of prophecy, but to their own carnal minds, which dwelt with fondness upon those parts of the description which flattered their passions and sordid views, and turned away with disgust from the lowly scenes amidst which his career was to commence. They had no wish to be saved from any enemies, but those by whose power their nation was oppressed; and set no value upon any blessings, but such as would minister to their sensuality and ambition. Hence, when the Messiah did come, they rejected him. Rulers and people, learned and unlearned, joined in an outcry against him as guilty of presumption in claiming this character; and the false charge has been transmitted from father to son during a long series of years. The mention of his name still kindles the rage of the Jews; and, with impious lips, they pour curses upon him, leaving it to the Gentiles to hail him in the language of their fathers, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Let us, therefore, proceed to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah.

It is evident that the Messiah must have long since appeared, since the time fixed by prophecy for his manifestation is past, as even the Jews are constrained to acknowledge. It is a pitiful evasion to allege, as they do, that his coming has been delayed on account of their sins. In what place in scripture is it suspended upon their repentance and obedience? Can any thing be more absurd than to assign, as a reason for not sending him, the only cause for which God promised to send him at all, namely, the sins of men, which were to be expiated by his immaculate sacrifice? "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come."* But the sceptre has departed from Judah, the civil constitution of the Jews has been overthrown, and for many ages they have remained without a priest or a king. At the time when he whom we call the Messiah was born, they were under the dominion of Herod, an Idumean, but a proselyte to their religion, and therefore accounted one of themselves; their ancient forms were retained, they were governed by their own laws, and had rulers of their own nation. The sceptre had not departed, but it was at the point of departing; and this, therefore, was the critical moment at which the prophecies must either be fulfilled, or fail for ever; for, before the century expired, Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by the Romans, the people were expelled from their country, and scattered over the face of the earth. The dispersion of the Jews, which has lasted for more than seventeen hundred years, might convince them that the Messiah is come, and that they look in vain for another.

It was foretold that he should come while the second temple was standing. "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts."* These words were addressed to the Jews, who, after their return from the Babylonian captivity, were much discouraged by the difficulties which they experienced in building the temple, and by its inferiority to that which was erected by Solomon. It is predicted that it should be more glorious, not, however, by its external magnificence, but by the personal presence of Him, of whom the Schechinah, or the bright cloud which rested on the propitiatory, was a figure. "The Lord, whom ye seek," said another prophet, "shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts."† The house which the Jews, after their restoration, constructed for the solemn worship of God, was repaired, and in a manner rebuilt, by Herod the Great, in whose reign our Saviour was born; but it was never called or accounted a new temple, because the work was carried on by degrees, and the regular service was not interrupted. Ages have elapsed since it was laid in ruins. It perished in the overthrow of the city by the Romans, its walls were levelled with the ground, its very foundation was turned up, and the prediction was literally fulfilled, that not one stone should be left upon another. The Messiah, therefore, is come; and what the prophets had announced was accomplished, when the Son of Mary was presented to God in the temple, and afterwards in that place published the tidings of peace and salvation. The Jews saw only a man in homely attire, and without any worldly pretensions; but never was the temple the scene of such glory as now, when the God of the temple stood within its walls.

There is a prophecy in the book of Daniel, which fixes the time of his appearance with greater exactness. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after three-score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.—And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."‡ Different opinions have been entertained with respect to the commencement of these seventy weeks of years. According to Prideaux, who

* Gen. xlix. 10.

* Hag. ii. 9. † Mal. iii. 1. ‡ Dan. ix. 24—27.

supports his opinion by many learned arguments, they are to be dated from the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, when a decree went forth from that monarch to Ezra, to restore the nation and church of the Jews; and the seven weeks, or forty-nine years, extend from that period to the time of Nehemiah, when the walls of Jerusalem were finished, and the affairs of the nation were settled. The sixty-two weeks, or four hundred and thirty-four years, fill up the interval between Nehemiah and the appearance of the Baptist; and the one week, or the last seven years, were employed in the ministration of John and our Saviour. In the course of that week, or rather in the latter half of it, he made the sacrifice and the oblation to cease by his own death, which fulfilled the types, and was followed by the abolition of the ceremonial law. It is evident from this prophecy, that the Messiah is come; and the evidence is so clear, that the Jews are thrown into the utmost perplexity by it, and not knowing what answer to give to the arguments of Christians, wish to preserve silence on the subject, and pronounce a curse upon the man who shall presume to calculate the weeks of Daniel.

That the Messiah, whose advent is past, is Jesus of Nazareth, may be proved by the exact correspondence between his character and history, and the particulars mentioned in prophecy. He was of the tribe of Judah and the family of David, as we learn from his genealogy in Matthew and Luke; and these points, I believe, have not been disputed. In legal reckoning he was the son of Joseph, but in reality he was the son of Mary. The descent of Joseph from David is traced in Matthew, and of Mary in Luke, although her name does not occur in it. In this way we account for the difference in the two genealogical tables, which, while both point out David as his progenitor, do not agree in one particular with respect to the intermediate persons. Now, unless we were to suppose the evangelists to have written at random, this difference is a proof that, having the same object in view, namely, to show that he was of the royal family, they prove it, the one by the lineage of his reputed father, and the other by that of his mother.

The place of his birth was Bethlehem, according to the prediction of Micah: "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."* And how was this prophecy fulfilled? Joseph and Mary had taken up their residence in Nazareth of Galilee, which lay at least seventy miles north from Jerusalem, while Bethlehem was situated some miles to the south. Had the pious pair, when the time drew near that Mary should be delivered, gone intentionally to the appointed place, the truth of prophecy would have been established by their voluntary agency. But it does not appear that they had formed such a design, or that the propriety of it had ever occurred to them. God had purposed to accomplish his word, not by the instrumentality of persons who should knowingly co-operate with him, but by a man who was ignorant of prophecy, and had never heard of the Messiah. Augustus, sitting on the throne of the Roman world, issues a decree that all his subjects should be taxed or enrolled. The design of Cæsar is to replenish his treasury with their silver and gold, or to ascertain their number and wealth, that he may be acquainted with his resources against any future emergency. The design of God is to bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, to which the descendants of David were commanded to repair, that their names might be inserted in the family register. Augustus thought only of gratifying his avarice or ambition: God thought of fulfilling his word. We see the whole empire in motion, and thousands hastening, every man to his own city, at the command of their sovereign, and we are apt to look upon this mighty bustle merely as a political movement. But God is the prime mover, and his object is to conduct, without noise and without a miracle, two of the humblest of the emperor's subjects to a small city, in a distant province, because he had determined, and by the mouths of his prophets had foretold, that there the Messiah should be born.

As his birth corresponded, in all its circumstances, with the ancient predictions, so did every other particular in his history. Our limits will not permit me to enter into a minute detail. According to the descriptions of the prophets, there would be a wonderful mixture in his character, of humiliation and greatness, of suffering and triumph. To the Jews, who have adopted false notions respecting his person and work, the language of the Old Testament is a riddle which they are sadly puzzled to explain; and hence some of their doctors have had recourse to the supposition of two Messiahs, to whom they assign the different parts of the description, as it seems impossible that they should admit of an application to the same individual. The one will be of the tribe of Ephraim, and will suffer and die; the other will be of the tribe of Judah, and will conquer and reign. I need not spend a single moment in refuting an hypothesis which is supported solely by the authority of men, whose comments on Scripture furnish the most pitiable display of ignorance (and stupidity) which the world ever saw. The character of Jesus of Nazareth affords a full solution of the difficulty, which has compelled them to have recourse to this wretched expedient. In his human nature, which, like ours, existed at first in the feebleness of infancy, and when it grew up to manhood was placed in circumstances of poverty and degradation, we see the fulfilment of what had been spoken concerning his humiliation; and the predictions of his greatness are accomplished in the dignity of his person, which, although made flesh, and concealed, in a great measure, from the eyes of men, retained the glory which it had with the Father before the world began. The incompatibility of his sufferings with his triumph, exists only in the dreams of the Jews. They were not simultaneous, but successive; his course commenced in darkness, and ended in light; he first became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, and then he obtained a name above every name, which all the powers of earth and heaven adore. He sits at the right hand of his Father, and his enemies are made his footstool. It were easy to show, by a reference to the prophecies, that there is not one particular of his sufferings recorded by the evangelists, which had not been pointed out beforehand; so that there is not a mere resemblance between the character of Jesus Christ, and that of the Messiah, but an exact coincidence; a coincidence in so many minute circumstances, that it could not have taken place by accident, and can be explained only by the identity of the person. It could not happen by chance that, agreeably to the ancient predictions, he was betrayed by one of his own followers, sold for thirty pieces of silver, buffeted, scourged, and spit upon; that he was condemned by the common consent of his own countrymen and the Gentiles; that he was put to death by crucifixion, which was not a Jewish punishment, and in company with criminals; that vinegar was given to him during his last sufferings, and his clothes were partly divided, and partly disposed of by lot; that he was insulted by his enemies, and, in particular, derided for his faith; that he was pierced with a spear; and finally, that, although it was intended to bury him along with his fellow-sufferers, his body was deposited in the sepulchre of a rich man. It would have required the co-operation of many persons to bring all these circumstances together by de-

* Micah v. 2.

sign; but as the agents had nothing in view, except to gratify their own feelings, we perceive the hand of God pointing out his own Son as the object of our faith, by fulfilling whatsoever his counsel had determined before to be done.

The messiahship of Jesus is farther manifest from the wonderful works which he performed. These prove that he was the expected Redeemer, because it was foretold that his advent should be signalized by works at once beneficent and divine: "Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence: he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."* Hence the Jews expected such signs to be exhibited by the Messiah, as we learn from the words of some of them who believed in him, and said, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"† But farther, these miracles prove him to be the Messiah, because they were express attestations to his character by his Father, in concurrence with whom he performed them. Hence he appeals to them as such: "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me."‡ And again, when the Jews were filled with indignation, and threatened to stone him, because he called himself the Son of God, he said to them, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him."‖ The argument from miracles is well understood. Whether we consider those of our Saviour as performed by his own power, or by that of his Father, we arrive at the same conclusion. If they were performed by his own power, they prove that he was a divine person, to whose declarations concerning himself, implicit confidence is due. If they were performed by the power of his Father, they were his solemn attestation to the mission and doctrine of Christ. The allegation of the Jews, that his miracles were wrought by the assistance of evil spirits, had no better foundation than their ignorance and malignity; their ignorance—in supposing that those spirits could perform real miracles, and particularly such miracles as displayed an uncontrolled dominion over all nature; their malignity—in ascribing to them, in opposition to the clearest dictates of reason and religion, works confessedly benevolent and holy. Certainly they would not have changed the course of nature to advance the glory of God, and the best interests of the human race. The answer of our Saviour must have carried conviction to any candid mind: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub."§

The last argument by which we prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, is founded on the success of his religion. Let us reflect upon the circumstances in which it was promulgated. The Author of it was a person rejected by the only nation which expected the Messiah, and knew anything about his character; and, by that nation, he was not only pronounced to be a deceiver, but subjected to an ignominious death; so that there was every human probability that his name would be soon forgotten, or be remembered only as an object of reproach. No person could have dreamed, that a man who had been crucified as a malefactor in a distant province, would acquire such posthumous fame, as to be acknowledged and adored in the proud capital of Rome, and throughout the whole extent of the empire: whether we consider the nature of his doctrine, the persons who were employed in preaching it, or the opposition which it had to encounter, there was no likelihood that it would ever attain a footing in the world; and still less, that it would become the dominant religion. His doctrine was offensive to all classes of men, because it interfered with their opinions and usages, and called upon them, not only to adopt a new creed, but to engage in a new course of life to which they felt the utmost repugnance. The preachers could not give it the recommendation which a system derives from the rank and authority of its patrons, and the eloquence and learning which they enlist in its service; for they were of a low rank, and wanted all the qualifications which attract the notice and admiration of mankind. These were its only or its chief friends, when it appeared; all other men were leagued together as its enemies; the high, the mighty, and the wise; the rulers of states, and the interested ministers of the various superstitions which were established on the earth. In whatever way we may account for its wonderful success in circumstances which foreboded a certain failure, it supplies a new evidence in support of the claim of Jesus of Nazareth to the character of Messiah. If its success should be attributed to its intrinsic excellence, what but truth could take such hold of the minds and consciences of men, as to command their assent, notwithstanding strong motives to reject it? If we say that it was the effect of Divine power, exerted not only in miracles, but in secret influences upon the hearts of men, we acknowledge that the gospel is authenticated by the seal of God, and that he who preached it was his Son.

It deserves, in particular, to be considered, that the doctrine of Christ has been embraced by the Gentiles, and has caused a great revolution in the religious state of the world. The law of Moses was confined to the Jews, and a few proselytes who occasionally submitted to it; it was not intended to be universal, and its peculiar usages rendered it impossible that it should ever become the religion of mankind. But it was foretold of the Messiah, that he should be "a light to enlighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel;"* "the heathen would be given to him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession;"† "the isles would wait for his law;"‡ and, "from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same, the name of God would be great among the Gentiles."‖ Of the fulfilment of these predictions, there was no appearance for many centuries after they were uttered; but they have been fulfilled since the coming of our Saviour. As he gave a commission to the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, and they extended their labours beyond the limits of Judea, so his religion has ever since been professed by nations converted from heathenism. By the propagation of the gospel, the ancient idolatry has been overthrown, the knowledge of the true God has been diffused, and his worship established; his law has been promulgated as the only standard of right and wrong, and men have been taught to expect salvation only through his crucified Son. His kingdom does not yet extend "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth;" but what has been accomplished, encourages us to hope for greater things; and we look forward to the time when he shall achieve the conquest of the whole earth, and be acknowledged and honoured as universal Lord.

These are the principal arguments by which we prove, against the Jews, that Jesus of Nazareth is the

* Is. xxxv. 4—6. † John vii. 31. ‡ Ib. v. 36, 37.
‖ Ib. x. 37, 38. § Luke xi. 17, 18.

* Luke ii. 32. † Ps. ii. 8. ‡ Is. xlii. 4. ‖ Mal. i. 11.

promised Messiah. I have omitted many particulars which might have been introduced under the general heads, and given you only a superficial view of the subject. What has been said, is sufficient to confirm our faith in this fundamental article of religion. The character of Messiah includes several offices to which our Saviour was anointed, and by the execution of which he accomplishes the salvation of his people. These we shall afterwards consider; but, in the mean time, it is necessary to inquire into the mysterious constitution of his person, by which he was qualified for those offices, and which is intimately connected with his messiahship, in the creed and confession of the Church. "We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."* This important point will be the subject of the next lecture.

LECTURE LIII.

ON THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

The human nature of Christ—Heretical opinions respecting it—Integrity of it—Its sinlessness—Necessity of his assumption of human nature—The constitution of his person, by the union of the divine and human natures—Effects of this hypostatical union.

Having proved that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah promised to the Fathers, I proceed to speak of his person, before I enter upon the consideration of his particular offices. To a Jew, it would seem that this inquiry is unnecessary, or may be reduced to narrow limits, it being enough to know his human descent, as there is no distinction between him and other men, except in his high destination, his superior endowments, and his achievements. Some professed Christians are of the same opinion, and maintain, that he who was born in the fulness of time, was in every respect a man like ourselves. It is certain, however, that the expectations of the ancient people of God pointed to a nobler object, in consequence of the declarations of the prophets, that the Redeemer of Israel should be one who might "be called Jehovah our righteousness," and "Immanuel," which signifies "God with us." Our own Scriptures are still more explicit, and, in language which does not admit of a figurative interpretation, inform us, that it was the Word who "was God," and "by whom all things were created," that was "made flesh and dwelt among us;" that it was the Son of God who was made of a woman; and that he who came of the Jews, according to the flesh, was "God over all, blessed for ever." These, and many other passages, import that in him the divine and the human nature were united; so that of the same person it may be affirmed with truth, that he is the fellow or the equal of the Lord of hosts, and the kinsman and brother of the children of the dust.

This article of our religion has been opposed with great violence in every age, and by heretics of various descriptions. It is the rock on which the Church is built, and the powers of darkness have exerted their utmost efforts to overthrow it. It is not necessary to review those opinions, which aimed at subverting the foundations of our faith by denying the divinity of Christ, whether he was affirmed by the Ebionites, and others, to be *a mere man*, ψιλος ανθρωπος, or at a later period by the Arians, to be a secondary deity; because we have formerly proved that he is God, equal to the Father. Our present design only requires that we should take notice of the errors which immediately related to the constitution of his person as θεανθρωπος, God and man.§

* John vi. 60.

Let us begin with the consideration of the nature which he assumed. And here we are met by two opinions which were vented in the primitive times, in opposition to the common faith of Christians, founded on the authority of Scripture. The first is that of the Docetæ, who were so called on account of their distinguishing tenet, that our Saviour was not a man in reality, but in appearance only. It was held by different individuals and sects; but as they concurred in this opinion with respect to the Christ, they received in ancient times this common designation. According to them, what was supposed to be the Man Christ Jesus, was a mere phantom, and his crucifixion was a scenical representation, by which the senses of the spectators were imposed upon. It surely is not necessary to attempt an elaborate refutation of a heresy so manifestly contrary to the most explicit declarations of Scripture. "Forasmuch," says an apostle, "as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same."* There is no reason why we should listen for a moment to men who give the lie direct to an inspired writer, and would persuade us that, for the space of more than thirty years, God, for no conceivable end, deceived the Jewish nation by a series of miracles, (for it was only by miracle that they could be made for so long a time to think that a shadow was a solid substance;) and that our hope of salvation by the death of our Redeemer is vain, as he did not shed his blood for us, and, in truth, had no blood to shed. The second opinion, destructive of the human nature of Christ, is said to have been maintained by Arius and Eunomius, who affirmed that he had a body, but not a soul, and that the Logos, or his superior nature, supplied its place. Apollinaris, or Apollinarius, also taught that the Son of God assumed manhood *without a soul*, ψυχης ανευ, as Socrates relates; but afterwards, changing his mind, he said that he assumed a soul, but that it did not possess the intelligent or rational principle, νουν δε ουκ εχειν αυτην;† and that the λογος‡ was instead of that principle, αντι νου.‖ Human nature he conceived to consist of three parts, a body, a soul, and a mind, of which the latter was wanting in our Saviour. The contrariety of both opinions to Scripture is apparent, and particularly of the former, which affirms that he had no soul. Besides that it is expressly mentioned by himself, when he said in his agony, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,"§ and when, on the cross, he committed it to his Father, there is the same evidence that he possessed this essential part of our nature, as there is that it belongs to any other man; his thoughts, his reasonings, his feelings, his affections, his joys and sorrows, his hopes and fears, being all indications of the existence of that living and intelligent principle, of the operation of which we are conscious in ourselves, and to which we give the name of the soul. It was impossible that the Divine nature was in him instead of a soul, because it is omniscient, and there were some things of which he declared himself to be ignorant; and because his sufferings, and fears, and sorrows, were incompatible with the perfect felicity of which it is immutably possessed. Can we conceive the Divine nature to have been in an agony, and to have exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"¶

We conclude, therefore, in opposition to those heresies, that our Redeemer assumed a complete human nature; or, as our Catechism expresses it, with its usual accuracy, that he took to himself "a true body and a reasonable soul." In the ancient creed, which goes under the name of Athanasius, he is said to have "not only been perfect God, but perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting."

* Heb. ii. 14. † But it had not intellect.
‡ The word, or divine reason.
‖ Instead of intellect. Socrat. Hist. Eccles. lib. ii. c. 44.
§ Matt. xxvi. 38. ¶ Ib. xxvii. 46.

While we maintain the integrity of his human nature, we admit that he assumed it with all its sinless infirmities. These may be comprehended in the word *flesh*, which is used by the evangelist John, in speaking of his incarnation; at least the word suggests this idea in other places where it occurs. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh."* "He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again."† In both passages the term seems to represent man as a being frail and mortal. Our Redeemer was not subject to any of the sinful infirmities of our nature, to sensual appetites and transports of passion; nor was there any stimulus or incentive to sin in the constitution or temperament of his body. The Scripture is careful, when it asserts his conformity to us in other things, to make this important exception. "He was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin."‡ He was subject to none of those diseases which are the portion of man, who is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. Infirmities of this kind would have discommoded him in the discharge of his duty, and he was exempted from them on account of his personal purity. But he was subject to hunger and thirst, to cold and heat, and weariness, to pain of body arising from external injuries, and to distress of mind from the experience or apprehension of evil, and from the effects produced upon his feelings by the scenes with which he was surrounded. Although living in our world, he might have been defended against every annoyance by the order of Omnipotence, as an angel of heaven would be, were he to descend to the earth, and sojourn in it for a season; but such a state would not have accorded with the design of his mission. He submitted to our infirmities, that he might acquire an experimental knowledge of our sufferings, corporeal and mental, and we might be more fully assured of his sympathy; besides that it was only by his tears, and agony, and death, that the great work of our redemption could be accomplished. "We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted like as we are."‖

Before we proceed farther, the question occurs, What was the reason that the Son of God assumed the nature of man? Some of the Schoolmen were so bold as to affirm, that he would have assumed it although man had not sinned. I do not know what arguments they advanced in support of this opinion, nor is it necessary to inquire, because, without hearing them, we may confidently pronounce that they are unsatisfactory and false. Their philosophy, such as it was, could give them no assistance in a matter of pure revelation; and every thing which the Scriptures say upon the subject, directly tends to the opposite conclusion. He became man for the redemption of men, the assumption of our nature being necessary to prepare him for those services and sufferings by which alone we could be redeemed. "Verily," says Paul, "he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham."§ The word which we translate, *took on him*, or *assumed*, signifies *to take hold of*, *to assist*, or *to help*, and was so understood by the Greek commentators, the most competent judges. The true sense of the passage, I apprehend, is, that the Son of God interposed for the deliverance, not of angels, but of men; and the nature of his interposition is stated in the preceding verses. "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;"¶ that is, he helped man by becoming a man. It is related by Cæsar, that it was an opinion of the Gauls, "that unless the life of man was given for the life of man, the immortal gods could not be appeased."** It would be absurd to quote their sentiments in support of a doctrine of revelation, especially as they founded upon them the cruel and detestable practice of human sacrifices; but it is worthy of attention that they had adopted an idea which in general was true, and was the reason of the great mystery which we are at present considering, the incarnation of our Saviour. If an atonement was necessary, we cannot conceive it to have been made by the sufferings of any other nature than that which had incurred the penalty of sin. No such relation could have been established between two beings of totally different natures, between a man and an angel, that, in consequence of it, what was done by the latter, should have been accepted, as if it had been done by the former. We can understand how the services of an individual may be admitted as an equivalent for the services of the whole class to which he belongs; but there is no principle on which we could account for the same mode of estimating the services of an individual of a different class. If an angel had suffered, there would have been no display of the righteousness of God; as, in that case, the nature which had sinned would have escaped with impunity. It behoved the surety, in this case, to be closely allied to the debtors, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, that he might be identified with them in legal reckoning.

To this argument for the incarnation of our Saviour it may be objected, that God might have saved us without satisfaction to his justice, and consequently, that there was no absolute necessity for the manifestation of his Son in the flesh. He might have freely pardoned our sins, bestowed blessings upon us unbought and unsolicited, and admitted us to communion without a mediator. Some have hazarded this opinion, which is as little distinguished by modesty as by reverence for Scripture. It imports that the mission of Jesus Christ was gratuitous in every sense; that without any sufficient reason he was subjected to sorrow and death; that there has been a theatrical display of the severity of divine justice, to persuade us that it is inflexible and inexorable, while it would not have been dishonoured, although sin had been permitted to pass with impunity; and that the love of God is not so wonderful as we were wont to believe, because its greatest gift might have been withheld without at all hindering our salvation. Such consequences will justify us in rejecting this opinion, especially when we consider that it does not find the shadow of support in the Scriptures, and rests on no more solid basis than the speculations of presumptuous men.

The necessity of the incarnation farther appears from the nature of the sufferings which our Redeemer had to endure. They were sufferings which would atone for the guilt of the people of God from the beginning to the end of the world. These were not easy to be borne. Human nature, unsupported by superior power, would have sunk under them. They would have crushed the mightiest of our race; they would have overwhelmed the highest angel in irretrievable misery. As it was necessary, therefore, that the penalty of the law should be inflicted on the nature which had sinned, so it was necessary that that nature should be so sustained in the dreadful enterprise, as, although bruised and broken, not to be utterly destroyed. The Son of God united it to himself; he was present with it more intimately than he is with the angels of heaven; he upheld it by the power of his divinity; and hence, although the man Christ Jesus was in such an agony, that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground, he bore all his woes with invincible fortitude, and closed the scene with the words of triumph on his expiring lips: "It is finished."

The assumption of our nature by the Son of God is expressed in the Scriptures, by his "partaking of our flesh and blood," by his "being made flesh," and by

* Gen. vi. 3. † Ps. lxxviii. 39. ‡ Heb. iv. 15. ‖ Idem.
§ Heb. ii. 16. ¶ Ib. 14. ** De Bell. Gall. lib. vi.

his "being manifested in the flesh." The Greek writers called it ἀνθρωπησις, ἐνανθρωπησις, ἐνσωματωσις, and ἐνσαρκωσις;* of which last term, the ecclesiastical Latin word *incarnatio*, which we have adopted into our language, is a literal translation. The act by which the union was formed, we cannot explain; but it constituted such a relation between him and our nature, that it is now as really his nature as is the divine. He is as truly man as he is God. This peculiar relation was indispensably necessary to the unity of the Mediator. Had the two natures, however intimately connected, not been personally united, their actions would not have been referrible to one agent; there would have been two agents, perfectly distinct, whereas now the person of Christ, if I may so express myself, is one principle of operation in the accomplishment of our redemption.

To illustrate this point more fully, I remark that it was not a human person which our Saviour assumed, but a human nature. The distinction between these is important, and should be carefully considered. By a person, we understand an intelligent being subsisting by himself, and not dependent upon any other. This is the meaning of the word when it is used in reference to men; when applied to the Trinity, it expresses a distinction which we cannot explain. To say that the Son of God assumed a human person, would be an express contradiction, because there is an idea imported in the word assumed, with which the personality of his human nature is absolutely inconsistent; for it imports that he made it his own; and besides, on this supposition, as we have already remarked, the acts of the man would not have been the acts of the Son of God, and consequently would not have been available for our salvation. He assumed a human nature, or, in other words, made it his own nature, by giving it a subsistence in his divine person. The term *personality* merely imports, that the nature of which we are speaking, subsists by itself. To deny, therefore, the personality of the human nature of Christ, takes nothing from it that is essential; it simply represents it as standing in a peculiar relation to another nature. It would have been a person, if it had not been united to the Son of God; but, being united to him, it cannot be called a person, because it does not subsist by itself, as other men do; each of whom has an independent existence. "The Son of God," says our church, "became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man, in one person for ever." And the Athanasian creed affirms, that, "although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ."

When, in speaking upon this subject, we use the phrase, the constitution of the person of Christ, it is necessary to guard against a misapprehension of the meaning. It is not that his person is made up of two constituent parts, the divine and the human nature; for this would imply that the Son of God was not a person before the union, or that he became a different person after it. The union of the soul and the body is the object in nature which most resembles it, particularly in this respect, that as these compose one individual, what is said of either of them may be predicted of that individual; and, in like manner, what is affirmed of either of the natures of Christ, may be affirmed of Christ himself. But the resemblance is not exact; for neither the soul nor the body is a person by itself, but the divine nature of our Saviour had a personal subsistence prior to its union to the human. His person is not a compound person; the personality belongs to his Godhead, and the human nature subsists in it by a peculiar dispensation. The assumption of our nature caused no change in his person; it added nothing to it; and the only difference is, that the same person, who was always possessed of divinity, has now taken humanity.

It was the second person of the Trinity who alone was incarnate, as is evident from the Scriptures. It was the "Word" who "was made flesh," the "Son" who was "sent forth in the fulness of time, made of a woman." The incarnation was a personal act, and was therefore limited to the person whose act it was. We say, indeed, that the divine nature was incarnate, but we speak of it not *immediately*, to adopt the language of scholastic Theology, and as it is considered absolutely and in itself, but *mediately* in the person of the Son, or as far as it is determined and characterized in the person of the Son. The incarnation was not an act of the divine nature, but of a person in that nature, and therefore terminated upon that person alone. The whole divine nature may be said to have been incarnate; but this is true only because the whole divine nature is in the second person of the Godhead. In this way we may explain our meaning; but I am not sure that any distinct idea will be conveyed into the mind of the hearer. If the divine nature is in all the persons of the Trinity, we cannot understand how the incarnation was the act of one, and not of all; and the reason is, that we do not understand in what their personal distinction consists: yet we are certain that there is such a distinction, in consequence of which some acts are ascribed to one person, and others to another; and, in particular, that it was the Son who assumed our nature, and not the Father, or the Holy Ghost, although both concurred in this act; the Father by his appointment and approbation, and the Holy Ghost by his immediate agency in the miraculous conception.

This doctrine concerning the person of Christ was opposed by two heresies, which were broached in the fifth century, and after much disputation and confusion, terminated in the separation of their respective adherents from the communion of the catholic church. The first was the heresy of Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, who is said to have taught that there are two persons in Christ, a divine and a human. It originated in the conduct of one of his presbyters named Anastasius, who publicly condemned the title of θεοτοκος, or Mother of God, which was frequently given to the Virgin Mary, because, as he said, she was a woman, and of a woman God could not be born. He was supported by Nestorius, who zealously taught the same doctrine, and maintained that she should be called only χριστοτοκος, or the Mother of Christ. A great clamour was immediately raised; suspicions were entertained, that he denied the divinity of Christ; his enemies eagerly laid hold of the opportunity to humble and overwhelm him; and the affair having been brought before a council assembled at Ephesus, A. D. 431, his heresy was condemned, and it was declared, "that Christ was one divine person, in whom two natures were most closely united, but without being mixed or confounded together." Not a few of the moderns are of opinion, that his sentiments were misunderstood and misrepresented during the violence of the controversy. Men do not always admit all the consequences which others draw from their opinions, nor even all which may be legitimately deduced. It is acknowledged by some ancient writers, and particularly by the historian Socrates, that he was sound in his views of the Trinity, and consequently of the divinity of Christ.* He himself denied the charges which were fixed upon him by his enemies, and in one of his epistles virtually maintains the doctrine of his opponents, when he says, that Christ is a name sig-

* *Literally, humanation, inhumanation*, i. e. a becoming man, the assumption of human nature; *incorporation, incarnation.*

* Socrat. Hist. Eccles. Lib. vii. c. 32.

nificant of an impassible and a passible essence in one person, and that he acknowledged in him *ἓν πρόσωπον*. Hence it is not improbable that he and his opponents agreed in sentiment, and differed only in words. The controversy, however, gave rise to a sect called by his name, which held this unscriptural doctrine, "that there were two persons in our Saviour, the one divine and the other human; that a union was formed between the Son of God, and the Son of man, in the moment of the virgin's conception, and will never be dissolved; that it was not, however, a union of nature or of person, but only of will and affection; that Christ was therefore to be carefully distinguished from God, who dwelt in him as in his temple; and that Mary was to be called the mother of Christ, and not the mother of God."

It is not necessary to engage in a formal confutation of this heresy, which expressly contradicts the passages formerly quoted, and others which affirm that the "Word was made flesh;" that he who was "in the form of God took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man;" that the Son of God was "made of a woman;" and that her child was "God with us;" all which assert, as clearly as words can do, the unity of his person. Were the doctrine of the Nestorians true, the hope of the church founded on the divinity of the Saviour would be vain; for he who died upon the cross was a man, more highly exalted indeed than other men, but still a creature only, whose blood could not have atoned for the sins of the world.

The author of the other heresy was Eutyches, the abbot of a monastery in Constantinople, who expressed himself thus; "I acknowledge two natures in Christ before the union, but after the union I acknowledge only one nature." He did not specify the time when the union took place; but some of his followers said, that it took place at the conception, some at the resurrection, and some at the ascension. His opinion seems to have been, that his human nature was absorbed by the Divine, and that the divine nature alone remained. It underwent modifications by those who succeeded him, some of whom chose to say, "that in the Son of God there was one nature, which, notwithstanding its unity, was double and compounded;" while others, who assumed the name of Monophysites, laid down this proposition, "that the divine and human nature of Christ were so united as to form only one nature, yet without any change, confusion, or mixture of the two natures." The heresy of Eutyches was condemned by the council of Chalcedon, A. D. 451, which promulgated the following decree, as expressive of the faith which all Christians should hold, "that in Christ two distinct natures were united in one person, without any change, mixture, or confusion."

The distinction of the two natures in Christ was manifest while he lived upon earth. As God, he knew all things, but as man, there were some things which he did not know; as God, he was blessed for ever; but as man, he was acquainted with grief; as God, he was the living One; but as man, he died upon the cross. That the distinction is continued in the heavenly state is certain from this fact, that "he will so come in like manner as he was seen to go into heaven;"* that is, will return in the human nature, and that he is the ordained man, by whom God will judge the world in righteousness. The absorption of the human nature by the divine, or the mixture of the two natures, is perfectly unintelligible.

The ancient church maintained that the two natures of our Saviour were united, *ἀδιαιρέτως* and *ἀχωρίστως indivisibly and inseparably*, against the Nestorians, and *ἀτρέπτως* and *ἀσυγχύτως without change and confusion*, against the Eutychians. In opposition to both, it is declared in the Athanasian creed, that "though our Saviour be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ, one, not by conversion of the godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God, one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person; for, as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." Our own church teaches, "that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man."*

Let us now attend to the effects of the constitution of his person. The first effect which demands our attention, has been already noticed, namely, that by the union of our nature to his divine person, it was qualified to accomplish our salvation. It was not like our nature in Adam, which, although perfectly innocent, and endowed with all holy dispositions, was fallible, and might be overcome by temptation; but it was supported by the divine, and could not fail or be discouraged. While it was thus enabled to endure the arduous trial, a value accrued to its acts, which would not have belonged to them, although they had been performed by the highest creature in the universe; for they were the acts, not of the man alone, but of the Son of God, who was united to the man. When God says, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people,"† he refers to the constitution of the Messiah's person; and the might which is ascribed to him, was not inherent in his human nature, but in the divinity. This is evident, even to the adversaries of his Godhead, who, aware that upon their hypothesis he could not have performed the work which we assign to him, deny that he did perform it, or that he offered an atonement for sin; and even proceed so far as to affirm, that he was subject, not only to the sinless, but to the sinful infirmities of our nature. Indeed, a human Saviour might have taught us our duty, and communicated such revelations as God had empowered him to make; but he could not have averted the wrath of God from us, nor have restored us to his favour. Such a Saviour could not have been proposed as the object of religious confidence. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.—Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."‡ The object of the faith of the ancient Church was the same divine Redeemer who is exhibited to us as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, who by himself purged our sins."‖ "Surely, shall one say, in Jehovah have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."§

The second effect of the constitution of his person is what the Greeks called *κοινωνία ἰδιωμάτων*,¶ and frequently *ἀντίδοσις ἰδιωμάτων*.** In our language, it is the communication of properties, by which Theologians mean, that, in consequence of the union of the two natures, the properties of both are ascribed to his person; or the properties of one nature are ascribed to his person, when it is denominated from the other. It will make the matter more distinct to say, that the properties of one nature are predicated of the other, because both belong to his person. One of the Fathers

* Acts i. 11.

* Westm. Conf. c. viii. §. 2.
† Ps. lxxxix. 19.
‡ Jer. xvii. 5, 7.
‖ Heb. i. 3.
§ Is. xlv. 24, 25.
¶ Communication of Properties.
** Reciprocation of Properties.

gives the following example: "We may say concerning Christ, He who is our God, was seen by men, and conversed with them; and, This man was uncreated, impassible, and incomprehensible." The Scripture furnishes a variety of examples. The properties of the divine nature are ascribed to the human, or to him in the human, when Peter said to him, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;"* and Thomas, "My Lord and my God."† Human properties are ascribed to the divine nature, or to him as possessing the divine, when it was said that "the Lord of glory was crucified,"‡ and that God purchased the church with his own blood;"‖ for, after all that Griesbach has alleged against it, the word *God*, in this last verse, is probably the true reading, and, as such, is retained by some eminent writers. The reason that, in both cases, the properties of one nature are attributed to another, is the identity of the person to whom they equally belong, and who may be described by the one or the other, as occasion requires.

This is the sense in which we speak of the communication of properties, as an effect of the hypostatical union. We do not mean, that the properties of one nature were really communicated to the other; but that, all being the properties of one person, they are predicated of him, as denominated sometimes by the one nature, and sometimes by the other. The subject, however, is not always so understood. The Lutherans maintain a real communication of properties from the one nature to the other, or, at least, from the divine to the human. This opinion they have been led to adopt, with a view to support their peculiar ideas of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Renouncing transubstantiation, or the conversion of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, as held by the Church of Rome, they have embraced a dogma equally unintelligible, but more harmless in its consequences, namely, consubstantiation; which imports, according to the meaning of the term, that, although the elements are not changed into the substance of Christ, he is literally present in, with and under them. Against this notion, it was an obvious objection, that such presence was impossible, as his human nature is in heaven. In attempting to evade this difficulty, they have furnished an illustration of the remark, that, if a man has told a lie, he must tell another to cover it, lest it should rain through; and they fairly admonish us to be cautious in adopting opinions, lest, finding ourselves involved in one absurdity, we be led into another, and then into a third, and all for the purpose of defending the first. Consubstantiation cannot be true, unless the human nature of our Saviour be present in all places; but we know that a man cannot be in two places at the same time; that he is a local being, necessarily confined to a particular spot, which he must leave, when he wishes to be in another. The Lutherans remove this impossibility by supposing another, namely, that the human nature of Christ is endowed, in consequence of the personal union, with the property of ubiquity, or that his divine nature has communicated to it the attribute of omnipresence. It is the first step, as we say, in some cases, which is difficult; the rest are easy. We are not, therefore, surprised that, having bestowed one divine perfection upon the human nature of our Saviour, they should make a donation of others, and affirm, as some of them do, that it is also possessed of omniscience and omnipotence. I am not aware that it is necessary to discuss this strange and irrational doctrine. There are some opinions which confute themselves simply by being stated, and this, I apprehend, is one of them. It confounds the divine and human nature of Christ, by assigning the same properties to both. It deifies the man Christ Jesus, and, consequently, makes him cease to be man; it, in fact, represents him to be as truly God as the Second Person of the Trinity. The Scripture points out, most clearly, the distinction between his natures; and if in any case it seems, upon a superficial view, to confound them, the passages will be easily understood, by the principle of the communication of properties, in the sense already explained. The truth is, that it was neither the sense nor the sound of Scripture which led the Lutherans to adopt their opinion; it was, if I may speak so, a second thought, and was forced out of the Scripture, by perverting and torturing it, to support their foolish hypothesis respecting the sacrament. Were they asked, What they mean by the ubiquity of the human nature of Christ? I am persuaded that every intelligent person among them, speaking without prejudice, would acknowledge that he could not tell. A body can be present every where, only by being infinitely or indefinitely extended. Do they imagine that the body of our Saviour is commensurate with the universe, or even with this world? If they say so, do they affix any idea to their words; or can any person affix an idea to them?

The last effect of the hypostatical union, which I shall mention, is the honour which results from it to the human nature of our Saviour. This consists, primarily and chiefly, in the relation which it bears to the divine nature. God is said to dwell in the saints, but not as he dwells in the man Christ Jesus. The union, in this case, is of a peculiar kind; no other man ever was, or ever will be, so united to the Godhead. He who is God, has made our nature his own. This is the highest honour which could be conferred upon a creature, and would be incredible, were we not assured of it by the Word himself, who was made flesh. By the assumption of our nature, it was exalted above all created beings. Angels were originally greater than man; but man is now elevated above them; that is, his nature has obtained a rank, which leaves the loftiest of the heavenly host at an immeasurable distance. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands."* A man now sits upon the throne of the universe, and exercises dominion over all things in heaven, in earth, and in hell; a man is appointed to be the Judge of the world. It is evident, however, that he could not have been invested with this authority, if he had not been also God; for the government and final judgment of the universe manifestly require divine perfections, the knowledge of all things, unerring wisdom, and almighty power.

It has been inquired, Whether the human nature of Christ is the object of religious worship? but I apprehend this question is not attended with much difficulty. We do, indeed, find the Church in heaven and on earth, and the angels who surround the throne, worshipping the Lamb that was slain, and ascribing to him blessing, and honour, and glory and power; but we know that there is just ground for this homage in the divine nature which he possessed with the Father before the world began. The formal reason of religious worship is the infinite excellence of him to whom it is addressed. It is the want of this excellence which renders the worship of saints and angels idolatry. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only thou shalt serve."† It follows, therefore, that the human nature of Christ, although glorified above all conception, cannot be the formal object of worship, because it is a creature. The personal union did not deify it, but merely gave it a subsistence in the Second Person of the Trinity. We worship him who is God and man, but we worship him because he is God. We pray to him, because, as God, he hears and can help us; we wait on him, and obey

* John xxi. 17. † Ib. xx. 28. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 8. ‖ Acts xx. 28.

* Heb. ii. 7. † Matt. iv. 10.

him, because he is possessed of divine power and authority. This is the proper reason of those acts of worship which we perform to the Son; but the consideration that he still wears our nature, in which he died upon the cross, and ascended to heaven, is a powerful motive to serve him, and our great encouragement to hope for acceptance. While we look up to him as one who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and has a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, the awe with which the contemplation of his uncreated greatness would have inspired us, is abated, and we are emboldened to commit ourselves to his care, and confidently to expect his gracious aid in every time of need.

There is another question connected with the person of Christ, namely, Whether he is the object of worship as mediator? Divines commonly answer this question in the negative; because, in this character, he is inferior to the Father, and because he is the medium through which our prayers are offered up, and our services are accepted. His inferiority is, perhaps, not a sufficient reason for excluding the Mediator from divine honours, because it is merely economical, and is consistent with his equality in all other respects. In thinking of his official character, we must not lose sight of his essential dignity. It is acknowledged, however, that the ordinary method of Christian worship is, to address the Father by the Son; to pray to the Father for blessings, and to plead the merit of the Son as the argument for obtaining them. "Through him, we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father."* We come to the Father through the mediation of the Son, and by the assistance of the Spirit. We do not usually pray to the Son, but to the Father in his name; yet prayers may be addressed to the Son, because he also is God, and ought, by the express command of the Father, to receive the same honour from men with himself; and although, to speak accurately, we pray in the name of the Mediator, and not to him, yet I am not sure that exact attention to this distinction is absolutely necessary in practice, or that it is always observed by the people of God. There is no doubt that they often address him as their Saviour and Intercessor, and there are passages of Scripture which seem to set them an example. Did not John think of him as mediator when he uttered this doxology, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever!"† And is he not viewed in the same character by the Church, when it says, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!"‡ In a word, when we pronounce these words, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all; Amen:"‖ do we not address him as a distinct person from the Father, and a distinct agent in the work of our salvation, and, consequently, as the mediator, to whom is committed the dispensation of the grace of the new covenant?

It is surprising that there should have been any dispute on this subject, while certain principles are granted by all parties, which are fully sufficient to terminate the controversy. It is acknowledged that we ought to love the Mediator with religious affection, that we should confide in him, and commit our souls to his care, and that we should bow to his authority, and yield implicit obedience to his law. How, then, can there be any hesitation about the propriety of addressing our prayers to him? Are not faith and love the essence of religious worship? and is there any thing more sacred and solemn in prayer, than in the dedication of our souls and bodies to our Redeemer, that they may be protected by his power and saved by his grace? He to whom this homage may be justly paid, is entitled to every other honour; and our ingenuity in making nice distinctions is very unwarrantably employed, if it lead us to defraud him of any of his claims. Certainly we shall not err, if, laying aside unprofitable speculations, we humbly and devoutly obey the command which was long ago given to the Church respecting the Messiah, "He is thy Lord: worship thou him."*

* Eph. ii. 18. † Rev. i. 5, 6. ‡ Rev. v. 12. ‖ 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

LECTURE LIV.

ON THE PROPHETICAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

The particular offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, included in that of Mediator—Christ's investiture with them—Their respective provinces, and mutual relations—The prophetical office of Christ—Different periods and modes of administering it—View of Christ's instructions as a Prophet.

The general office with which our Redeemer was invested, is that of mediator between God and man. The nature of that office has been explained, and his qualifications for it have been pointed out. There are some particular offices comprehended in it, which I shall consider in their order.

Before we enter upon them, it will be necessary to attend to the manner in which he was invested with them, and fitted for the performance of their respective duties. We have seen that the fundamental qualification for his mediatorial office, was the assumption of our nature into personal union with the divine; but this important fact does not include all that the Scriptures say upon the subject. Something farther was done to the assumed nature, to prepare it for the high and arduous part which it was appointed to act.

Our Saviour is called in the Old Testament the Messiah, and in the New Testament the Christ; and both words import that he was the Anointed One. This designation is given to him, in allusion to the rite by which persons were consecrated to their offices under the former dispensation, namely, by being anointed with oil. This rite was observed in the case of the three offices which were most celebrated, those of prophet, priest, and king. With regard to the prophets, we have, I believe, the solitary instance of Elisha; but it is enough to establish the fact that it was occasionally, if not uniformly, used in setting them apart. The anointing of Aaron and his sons is expressly mentioned in the thirtieth chapter of Exodus; and particular directions are given with regard to the composition of the oil. Of the anointing of kings, we have examples in David and Solomon. In allusion to this rite, our Redeemer was called the Messiah or the Christ, to signify, not that he was consecrated by the same rite, but that he was solemnly appointed to his office by his Father, and furnished with all the requisite qualifications. The Father says concerning him, as is evident from the context, "I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him."† Material oil could confer no power, and impart no qualifications, and was merely a sign, of which the meaning was understood. In the present case, the sign was not used, but the thing signified was communicated in perfection. "He was anointed," says the Scripture, "with the Holy Ghost."‡

There are two periods at which this anointing took place. The first was his conception, when he was sanctified by the Holy Ghost, endowed with all the graces which can adorn human nature, and with those faculties which, being afterwards developed, excited admiration even in his youth; for at the age of twelve he astonished the doctors of Jerusalem by his wisdom,

* Psalm xlv. 11. † Psalm lxxxix. 20. ‡ Acts x. 38.

both in asking and answering questions. The second was his baptism, when "the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him."* The Spirit coming down from the opened heavens in a visible form rested upon him, to signify, in conjunction with the voice which proceeded from the excellent glory, to all who were present, that God recognized him as his Son, and bestowed upon him an abundant measure of heavenly influences. In this manner he was publicly installed in his office, and fitted for the discharge of its duties. And thus the prophecy was fulfilled, "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord: and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."†

This anointing relates to the human nature of our Saviour. I should have deemed this remark unnecessary, had I not found that even some professed theologians have entertained confused notions of the subject, and have hesitated to admit the plain proposition which has now been laid down. They seem to have been led into a mistake, by supposing that, because he was anointed as mediator, the unction extended to both his natures, forgetting that, in consequence of the hypostatical union, what is done to or by either of them, is done to or by his person. We say that the θεανθρωπος, the God-man, died for us upon the cross; but we mean that he died only as a man. In like manner we say, that our Mediator was anointed to his office; but we mean that he was anointed only in his human nature, unless we refer simply to his appointment to office, &c. And that we ought to mean nothing more, it requires very little reflection to perceive. The anointing is the communication of the Holy Ghost to qualify him for the duties of his office; but his divine nature stood in need of no new qualification, and could receive no accession of gifts and graces; whereas, his human nature possessed no excellence which had not been imparted to it, was capable of progressive improvement, and actually grew in wisdom as well as in stature, and in favour with God and with men.

The particular offices to which our Saviour was anointed, were the three which have been already mentioned as existing among the Jews, and which were conferred by the ceremony of pouring or sprinkling oil opon the persons set apart to them, the prophetical, the sacerdotal, and the regal. The first is ascribed to our Saviour in the following passage, which the use of it in the New Testament authorises us to apply to him, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken;"‡ the second in these words, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek;"‖ and the third, when God says to him, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."§ It is unnecessary to bring any quotations from the Christian Scriptures to prove, that all these offices belong to Jesus Christ. It has been remarked that, under the ancient economy, they were held by separate individuals, or at least that never more than two of them were united in the same person. There were kings and priests as Melchizedek; kings and prophets as David; and, perhaps, too, prophets and priests in the case of some of the family of Aaron; but no person occurs who was invested with them all. This honour was reserved to our Redeemer, who alone could realize in himself what was prefigured by the various types. Moses, however, may be considered an exception, who was at once the prophet of the Lord, the leader of the people, or "king in Jeshurun,"* as he is termed; and a priest, or one who at least performed the duties of a priest prior to the inauguration of Aaron. But this, it is said, was an extraordinary case, admitted only for a time, and not intended to be an example. This instance, however, seems to abate the force of the remark, as does likewise that of Samuel, although I do not find that it has been noticed, who was at once the judge of Israel, a prophet, and a priest. As, however, neither he nor Moses was high-priest, and both ministered occasionally only at the altar, it may be true that no person but our Saviour permanently possessed all these offices.

It was necessary that he should be a prophet, a priest, and a king, because the duties of all those offices were requisite to the complete deliverance of his people from the circumstances in which they were placed. The moral condition of mankind shows, that not one of them could be dispensed with. They were involved in ignorance, guilt, and pollution. Their ignorance is removed by his prophetical office, their guilt by his priestly office, and their pollution by his kingly office. As a prophet, he dispels the darkness of ignorance; as a priest, he atones for our sins; as a king, he delivers us from the bondage of depravity. He reveals God to us as a prophet; he brings us near to God as a priest; he renews us after the image of God as a king. As a prophet he illuminates our minds by the spirit of truth; as a priest, he tranquillizes our hearts and consciences by the spirit of peace; as a king, he sanctifies the whole man by the spirit of holiness. The necessity of all his offices for the complete and final salvation of men, is pointed out in these words of Paul; "Of God he is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."† As these offices relate to both God and man, God being the immediate object of the priestly, and man of the prophetical and kingly office, our Lord realizes the character of a mediator by performing their duties; for he establishes peace between heaven and earth, and binds them together in intimate and inviolable friendship.

In the relation of his offices to one another, the priestly office must be considered as the foundation of the other two. If Christ had not been a priest, he would not have been a prophet and a king; it being evident that, unless salvation had been obtained for us, it could not be revealed and applied. All his acts towards sinners for their deliverance from sin, and their restoration to the favour of God, pre-suppose an atonement by which Divine justice was satisfied. It was necessary that, as a priest, he should fulfil the condition of the new covenant, before he could administer it as a prophet and a king, for the communication of its blessings. But the order of the execution of his offices towards us is different. In the salvation of the soul, as in the creation of our world, he commences with the diffusion of light. The knowledge of ourselves and of the Saviour, is necessary to the production of faith, by which his righteousness is embraced as the only foundation of our acceptance with God. Conversion consists in "the opening of the blind eyes, and the turning of the soul from darkness to light;" and this is the work of his prophetical office. When

* Matt. iii. 16. † Is. xi. 2—5. ‡ Deut. xviii. 15.
‖ Ps. cx. 4. § Ps. ii. 6.

* Deut. xxxiii. 5. † 1 Cor. i. 30.

our Prophet manifests himself to us by his word and spirit in his mediatorial character, we come to him as our priest, whose sacrifice has expiated our guilt, and submit to him as our king, whose service is perfect liberty, and whose power will defend us from every evil.

I omitted to mention, in the proper place, that the elder Socinians, who believed that Christ was a mere man, and at first was ignorant of the doctrine which he was appointed to publish to the world, maintained that, before he entered upon his ministry, he was taken up into heaven, and there received all necessary instructions. Thus the Racovian Catechism, which is a summary of their creed, in answer to the question, How Jesus Christ came to the knowledge of the Divine will? says, "He ascended into heaven, and there saw his Father, and that life and blessedness which he has announced to us, and heard from his Father all the things which he ought to teach; and being afterwards let down from heaven to earth, he was anointed with an immense effusion of the Holy Spirit, by whose afflatus he delivered all the things which he had learned from the Father." The time when this is supposed to have happened, was soon after his baptism, and during his abode in the wilderness. It is enough to have stated this opinion, concerning which the Scripture preserves a profound silence, and which rests solely upon the confident and groundless assertion of those heretics. It was manifestly unnecessary that he should be taken up into heaven, because the will of God could have been as fully revealed to him upon earth. This fancy originated neither in Scripture nor in reason, but was a dishonest expedient resorted to for the purpose of supporting their favourite dogma concerning the simple humanity of our Saviour, by evading the argument for his pre-existence, founded on those passages of the New Testament which declare that he came down from heaven.

The word prophet, is commonly understood to mean a person who foretells future events; and in this sense it frequently occurs. But it also signifies a person who speaks by divine inspiration, whether the subject relate to the future, the past, or the present; a person who speaks in an eminent and extraordinary manner; and even a person who speaks in the name of another like himself. Indeed, the Greek word προφητης, and the Hebrew word נביא, are used with a considerable variety of meaning. By some of the Jews, the latter term is interpreted *an orator*, or *eloquent preacher*; and by others, *a man to whom God has revealed secret things*. In the following words of God to Moses concerning Aaron his brother, it simply denotes one who speaks in the name of another: "Thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth; and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of a God."* This passage is to be taken in connexion with what is afterwards said: "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet."†

It is not with the usual limitation of the term that we call Jesus Christ a prophet. We use it in its utmost latitude, to denote that he is the great messenger of God, the revealer of his counsels and will, who has not only foretold future events, but made known to us Divine truths to be believed, promises to be embraced, ordinances to be observed, and laws to be obeyed.

When we contemplate Jesus Christ simply as a divine person, we must consider him as the uncreated source of all intelligence and wisdom: He is "the true Light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world."* In his mediatorial character, however, he speaks not properly in his own name, but in the name of him who gave him his commission, and brings to us his Father's message. Hence we say, that he was invested with the prophetical office; the term, office, implying that he acted a subordinate part, and by the authority of another. What has been now stated is conformable to his own declarations, of which the following are a specimen: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak."† In the first verse of the Revelation of John, his intermediate agency in the communication of knowledge to the church is distinctly expressed: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John."‡

Having made these preliminary observations, I proceed to treat directly of his prophetical office. The exercise of it may be considered in three distinct periods. The first reaches from the fall to his incarnation; the second from that era, or from his baptism, to his death; and the third from his resurrection, and particularly from the day of Pentecost to the end of the world.

The first period extends from the fall to his birth; for, although he was not incarnate, he was the appointed Saviour of his people; and, as far as was consistent with his present state, he acted the part of a mediator. The assumption of our nature was not indispensably necessary to prepare him for giving instruction to mankind, although every gracious communication to the world pre-supposed that event as afterwards to take place, and was made in the view of it. There were frequent appearances of a divine person in the human form, who delivered commands and promises to the patriarchs; and it seems reasonable to conclude, that it was the same person who proposed actually to take our nature in a future age. It is highly probable, that it was he who promulgated from Sinai the system of laws which served as the foundation of religion for so many ages; and, indeed, by whom can we so naturally conceive sacrifices to have been instituted, and the knowledge of future events to have been communicated, as by him in whose person, and manifestation, and life, and death, and resurrection, and subsequent glory, the types and predictions were to be fulfilled? But there is no necessity to have recourse to conjectures and probabilities, when we are in possession of explicit and authentic information. The following words of Peter deserve particular attention: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time, the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."‖ The remarkable expression in this passage is, the "Spirit of Christ," or of the Messiah; which evidently signifies not merely, as the Socinians affirm, that he predicted the Messiah, but that he was sent by him; and, consequently, teaches us that the prophets were his ministers, commissioned and qualified by him to give instructions suited to that age of the church. Hence it appears, that he executed his prophetical office prior to his coming in the flesh, and that the books of the Old Testament contain the Revelation of Christ, as well as those of the New. It is not an objection against this statement, that God is said to have spoken to the fathers by the prophets, and in these

* Exod. iv. 15, 16. † Ib. vii. 1.

* John i. 9. † Ib. vii. 16, 17. xii. 49.
‡ Rev. i. 1. ‖ 1 Pet. i. 10, 11.

last days to have spoken to us by his Son;* words which seem to import that till the last days the ministry of the Son did not commence; because their design is merely to point out the difference in the external and visible agency under the two dispensations. Under the first, God made known his will by the medium of the prophets; under the second, by the medium of his Son in our nature. But the same person who, in the fulness of time, declared the will of God in person, revealed it before his incarnation by human messengers, as he continued to do after his ascension. The difference between the former and the present dispensation consisted chiefly in this, that the present commenced with the personal ministry of the Messiah; and hence the Gospel is called, the word "which began to be spoken by the Lord."†

The second period extends from the birth of Christ, or more properly from his baptism, when he entered upon his public ministry, to his death. During this period, the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, declared him to men with his own lips. The privilege which his contemporaries enjoyed, who heard his discourses, so full of wisdom and grace, was invaluable, although few of them understood and improved it. "Blessed," he said to his disciples, "are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."‡ Were I to attempt to give an account of the instructions which he delivered to his disciples and others, it would be necessary to transcribe, or at least to lay before you, a summary of the Gospels. In general, it may be observed, that, while he corrected the false notions of religion, and the perverse interpretations of the law of Moses, which prevailed among the Jews, he unfolded the character of God in all its perfection, called the attention of men to the cultivation of piety and holiness as alone acceptable to him, exhibited himself as the Messiah whom they expected, and gave intimations of the design of his mission, and the nature of the salvation which he had come to accomplish. At present I shall not speak more particularly of his doctrine, because it will come under review in the sequel of this lecture.

There is a question, however, which this is the proper place to consider, Whether Christ corrected and perfected the moral law, which was delivered to the Jews? It has been maintained, that the moral precepts of Christ were in some instances different from those of Moses, and that our Saviour has enlarged the law, by prescribing new duties, and has even prohibited certain actions which were formerly permitted. It is a favourite tenet of Socinians, that the moral system delivered to the Church before the coming of Christ, was imperfect, and needed correction or supplement, and they have been led to adopt it by their peculiar views with respect to the design of the mission of Christ. As they do not admit, with the Catholic church, that he came into the world to expiate our sins, it was necessary to find something for him to do, which should be worthy of the great expectations that were excited, and the mighty preparations that were introductory to his appearance. With this view they are anxious to prove, that the rule of morality which had been previously given to the Jews, laboured under many defects, that he might have the glory of having published to mankind a law clear and full, in which our whole duty to God and to man is explained. In the Racovian Catechism, which first appeared about the beginning of the seventeenth century, we find this question, "What are the perfect commandments of God, comprehended in the New Testament?" to which this answer is returned—"A part of them is contained in the precepts delivered by Moses, together with those which were added by Christ and his apostles, and a part is contained in those which were peculiarly prescribed by the same Christ and his apostles."* By the latter, I apprehend they mean precepts entirely new, and by the former old precepts improved. They go on to show, under the several precepts of the decalogue, the supposed additions and improvements, in a manner by no means satisfactory, and sometimes exceedingly trifling and silly. On the contrary, those whom we call orthodox, affirm that the law was absolutely perfect from the beginning; that Christ came not to destroy it, or any part of it, but to fulfil it; and that all the duties enjoined by him, which have been supposed to be new, may be resolved into love to God, or love to man. The right answer to this question depends upon the manner in which it is stated. In the Socinian sense, I have no hesitation in saying, that it leads to a conclusion which ought not to be admitted. If it were asked, Whether Jesus Christ enjoined greater love to God and our neighbour than was enjoined by the law of Moses? no man who had considered the subject, could hesitate to give a negative answer. But if it were asked, Whether he has prescribed new modes of expressing our love to both? I cannot conceive that there could be any heresy in saying, that he may have done so. Divines have endeavoured to prove, that faith in Christ, and repentance, are duties inculcated by the law which was given to Adam in innocence. This position requires explanation. Faith and repentance could not be duties incumbent upon man, while he retained his integrity, and consequently they can be referred to the moral law as originally given, only in the same sense in which all possible duties of all possible intelligent creatures might be referred to it, because it enjoins supreme love to God, from which universal obedience will flow. In strict language, they are new modifications of this principle, or new duties founded on new relations between man and his Creator. At the same time it should be observed that, whether we call them new or old, they were not prescribed for the first time by our Saviour, but were enjoined under the former dispensation. The arguments commonly advanced to prove that the moral law was corrected and improved by our Saviour, are of little or no force; either because the new duties which he is supposed to have enjoined, were binding before his coming, or because his design has been totally misapprehended, as if he was correcting the law itself, when he was only exposing and rejecting the corrupt glosses and traditionary maxims of the rabbies.

The third period extends from the accession of Christ, or rather from the day of Pentecost, when he poured out the Holy Ghost on his disciples, to the end of the world. But this period may be divided into two portions, according to the difference in the mode of administration. In the first he instructed the Church by extraordinary means. The apostles were inspired men, and delivered to the world the revelations which were made to them by the Spirit. And as it was the spirit of Christ who filled them with knowledge and wisdom, our Saviour continued to execute his prophetical office by their ministry, as much as when he declared the mysteries of the kingdom to his immediate followers with his own lips. This is also evident from his words to them on the evening before his death: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will

* Heb. i. 12. † Ib. ii. 3. ‡ Matt. xiii. 16, 17.

* Catech. Eccl. Pol. Sect. vi. Cap. 1.

show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and show it unto you."* There is no difference in respect of authority between the doctrines of his apostles, and those delivered by himself. They are equally his doctrines, and are entitled to be received with the same submission of mind, and the same undoubting confidence. Hence we perceive how groundless is the distinction which has been made between the gospels and the epistles, as if the former were a more certain rule of faith than the latter. As those who chiefly insist on this distinction, affirm that our Saviour was a mere man, peccable and fallible, there is no proper foundation for it in their system, because such a person could not be so much superior to the apostles, as to entitle his testimony to a decided preference to theirs, especially as theirs was confirmed by miracles as great and numerous as those which he performed. We have always reason to suspect those who depreciate one part of Scripture to enhance the value of another. This expedient has not been resorted to from a conviction of its truth, but to serve a particular purpose. Certain doctrines which its authors are unwilling to receive, are more fully and explicitly taught in the epistles; and the insinuations thrown out respecting their obscurity, the perplexedness of the reasoning, the abruptness of the style, and the inferiority of the writers, are designed to set aside their evidence in favour of those doctrines; as in a legal process, the imputations on the character of a witness, are intended to weaken the force of his testimony. The shift is as unavailing as it is dishonest, for it were easy to show that the contested doctrines, as the divinity and atonement of Christ, election and justification by grace, are plainly delivered in the gospels; and that the only respect in which the epistles differ from them is, that there they receive a more ample illustration, and the objections against them are considered and refuted. The epistles are the word of Christ, as much as the gospels, for the writers were assisted by his spirit in composing them. When conjoined with the Gospels, they fill up or complete what we call the Christian revelation, because it was communicated to the world by Christ himself, and his accredited messengers.

The second portion into which we have divided the last period of the ministry of Christ as a prophet, reaches from the close of revelation to the end of time. During this interval, he executes his office by ordinary means; that is, by the Scriptures, which it is his will that men should read and understand; by his ministers, who are appointed to explain and apply them; and by his Spirit, of whose agency, in the illumination of the mind, we shall afterwards speak. Jesus Christ, in his state of exaltation, continues to be the instructor of the ignorant, and of them that are out of the way; and his work will not cease, till all who are to be saved have been brought to the acknowledgment of the truth. Hence, he is represented as still speaking to us by his word, written and preached: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for, if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."† The system of ordinances, and ministers, and laws, instituted for the conversion and salvation of men, has emanated from his authority, and will be maintained by his providence, till its design is accomplished, in the perfection of every member of the Church. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."* Whatever knowledge of God and his will, of the purposes of grace, and the realities of the world to come, is found among men, it has been derived from the instructions of Christ; and his word will continue to impart wisdom to his disciples, till they have entered into the world above, where their faculties will be fully expanded, and vision will succeed to faith. He is the sun of the spiritual world, whose rays, penetrating into our benighted souls, diffuse a divine light, and make them shine with reflected glory. In short, as there is but one sun in the heavens, from which light has flowed to irradiate every region of the earth, throughout the successive generations of mankind; so, our Redeemer is the one source of all the spiritual wisdom which has enlightened them from the beginning of the world, in whatever form it has been communicated; whether as a record of the past, or a prediction of the future; a disclosure of mysteries which reason could not discover, or an authoritative publication of the will of the Supreme. And hence originates the unity of revelation, the harmony that binds together the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, the identity, in respect of substance, of the religions of the antediluvians and the men of the present age; for, great as the difference seems to be upon a superficial view, it is reduced to this single point, that the germ contained in the first notices of it has now developed itself, and yields fruit in abundance.

If you now ask, what Jesus Christ, as a prophet, has taught us? I might, in answer to the question, refer you to the Scriptures. These contain his instructions under both dispensations, and are the only rule of faith and obedience. I shall not attempt to give you a summary of his doctrine, which would occupy too much time; and, besides, would be improper, as it would necessarily lead to a repetition of topics, which have been already considered, and an anticipation of others, which will afterwards be discussed. I shall confine myself to a few general remarks.

First, He has illustrated certain truths of which men already possessed some knowledge, such as the existence of God, his providence and moral government, and the law which he has given for the regulation of our conduct. Of these, some notions were found among nations which had not been favoured with revelation; but they were imperfect, and mingled with errors, as we have seen in a former part of this course. It was in consequence of his teaching by the prophets, that the Jews were so distinguished by their creed, that, in matters of religion, the wisest nations of antiquity, when compared with them, were as children and fools. No philosopher could ever venture to pronounce, with unhesitating confidence, the proposition which was in the mouth of every rustic in Canaan, that God is one. It is owing to his teaching by the Apostles, that the polytheism, the idolatry, the gross superstition, the licentious maxims and barbarous usages of Greece and Rome, and other nations less civilized, have been supplanted by the pure and simple creed, which is adopted in Christian countries, or, at least, in such of them as acknowledge the Scripture alone as their standard. Those truths, which were once dimly seen, now shine with the light of day. The knowledge of them is facilitated, and is within the reach of the most common capacity, because they are not to

* John xvi. 12—15. † Heb. xii. 25.

* Eph. iv. 11—15.

be sought out by laborious investigation, but to be received upon authority. The voice of Jesus Christ has decided all controversies, and terminated all doubts respecting them. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."*

Secondly, He has established as certain, some points which were the subject of conjecture, or of fluctuating opinion. I refer particularly to the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments. On these topics much was talked and written, and, perhaps, they were not called in question by the common people, who did not reason about them, but gave credit to tradition. That the belief of the wisest among the heathens rested upon no solid foundation, is evident from this fact, that when they proceed to bring arguments, some of them are inconclusive and fanciful; and those which are of more weight, failed to produce conviction, as we see from the doubts expressed by the most eminent philosophers. If at one time they seem to have attained to certainty, at another they hesitated and wavered, and ended in leaving the matter to be determined by the event. "But Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." Coming from the invisible state, he has so far disclosed its secrets, as to assure us that the soul shall survive the death of the body, and will be consigned to bliss or woe by the sentence of its Judge. Although this truth may have little practical effect upon many of his followers; they never call it in question; and they alone doubt and disbelieve, who, having renounced him as their Teacher, commit themselves to the guidance of their erring reason, and the blinding influence of unholy passions. In the creed of his followers, it is a primary article, that the present is only the introductory stage of our existence; that at death we shall enter upon a new state of being; and that, through him, they who believe, shall enjoy perpetual felicity in heaven.

Thirdly, He has made known truths of which men were completely ignorant. I refer to the scheme of redemption in all its parts, which, having its origin in the sovereign will of God, is a matter of pure revelation. Some notions were entertained by heathen nations of the placability of the divine nature, and sacrifices were offered to appease the anger of the gods, and to conciliate their favour. But they could assign no satisfactory reason for their opinion or their practice. Their fathers had believed and acted in this manner before them, and they followed them without being able to show that their hope had any solid foundation. The truth is, that it was not from reason that they derived their ideas of the mercy of the Supreme Being, and the efficacy of sacrifices, but from revelation, of which some fragments, encrusted with superstition, had been handed down to them by tradition. Those faint rays, which glimmered amidst the darkness of heathenism, proceeded from the Sun of righteousness, but had been deprived of their splendor and their influence, by the grossness of the medium through which they were transmitted. All our knowledge of the gracious purposes of God, whether more or less extensive; whether consisting in hopes and conjectures, or in the full assurance of faith, must be traced to this source: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"† No one was present with him but his Son, when the plan was formed for the salvation of our guilty race. There is nothing in his external works to suggest the idea of it; there is no impression of heavenly mysteries upon visible objects. Providence displays his beneficence and his patience; but it gives no intimation of his purpose to bestow final felicity upon sinners, of an atonement to expiate their guilt, or of the communication of supernatural grace to purify their nature. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his spirit; for the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."* It is the glory of Jesus Christ as a prophet, that he has not only shed new light upon subjects of which men possessed some previous knowledge, but has disclosed a scene, in grandeur and interest, surpassing the wonders of creation. It is chiefly on this account that there was a necessity for his prophetical office. It is chiefly on this account that he is the Light of the world. And, indeed, all the other knowledge which he has communicated to mankind would have been of no avail, if he had not revealed his Father to us as the God of love, and himself in the character of a Saviour. What we wanted to know, was not merely that there is one God, but that he is propitious to his fallen creatures; not merely that we should worship him, but that our services shall be acceptable to him; not merely that there is a state beyond the grave, but by what means we shall obtain possession of its blessedness. On these important subjects, he has given us full satisfaction. How welcome to us should be a teacher, who speaks the words of truth and grace, and in the execution of his office, has realized the following interesting description:† "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." This is the jubilee of the human race, and the Messiah, in the character of our prophet, has announced it by the Gospel.

I shall resume the subject in the next Lecture.

* John i. 18. † Rom. xi. 34.

LECTURE LV.

ON THE PROPHETICAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

View of Christ's instructions as a Prophet continued—Superiority of Christ to all other Teachers, in the completeness, perspicuity, authority, and efficacy of his instructions—Agency of the Holy Ghost in the execution of Christ's Prophetical office; its necessity and effects.

In the preceding Lecture, I pointed out the qualifications of Jesus Christ for the prophetical office, the time during which it is executed, and the subjects of his instructions, of which only a very general account was attempted. You would observe, that the subjects to which I referred were all of a religious nature, and to these his instructions were confined.

Jesus Christ has said nothing concerning some topics to which the attention of men is earnestly directed, and which are intimately connected with their temporal interests; as science, politics, and the various arts by which life is sustained and adorned. Of these he took no notice; not because they are unimportant; for, in their own sphere, they are of great utility; but because they bore no relation to the purpose of his mission. In the business of the present life, reason and experience are sufficient guides. We needed no revelation to assist us in the study of nature, in the operations of husbandry and commerce, in the constitution

* 1 Cor. ii. 9—10. † Is. lxi. 1—3.

of civil government, and the enactment of laws for the security of our persons and property. The degree of knowledge which is necessary for purposes of practical use, may be obtained on these subjects by the exercise of the faculties with which our Creator has endowed us. There was no reason, therefore, why Jesus should have interrupted his more important labours to descend to details about these inferior matters. He was something higher than a philosopher or statesman; he was a teacher of sublime mysteries, which it had not entered into the mind of man to conceive.

He has not given us so full and particular an account of a future state as some men may deem desirable, and they may, therefore, look upon the want of it as a defect. Curiosity is a very powerful principle, and every thing which promises to gratify it meets with eager attention. How welcome to some persons would be graphical descriptions of heaven, and such a detail of the state of the inhabitants and their employments, as we receive, of the places which they have visited, from travellers on their return from a foreign country! Enthusiasts indulge in such descriptions. Mistaking the visions of fancy for realities, they retail them as authentic, and sometimes obtain for their fables the credit which is due only to truth. You might imagine that one of them had been in the celestial paradise, and had lately descended to the earth with the impressions of its scenes of magnificence and felicity fresh in his memory; while, in fact, he is the dupe of his own sleeping or waking dreams. Mahomet has portrayed his paradise with the bright colours of oriental imagery; and while it rises to the view of his deluded followers, with its groves of perpetual verdure, and its cooling streams, and its houris, and all its other sensual delights, they feel their hearts glow with augmented zeal for his religion, and new fervour of desire. Our Prophet, who alone could have given a faithful description of the invisible state, has abstained from it. He has contented himself with informing us, that there is a place of rest for his followers beyond the limits of this visible diurnal sphere, and with a general account of the exercises and enjoyments of those who are admitted into it. There is nothing to please the imagination; but there is enough to support faith, and animate hope, and minister consolation amidst the ills of life; and if these purposes are accomplished, his end is gained. If men will not be excited to a life of piety and holiness, by the simple knowledge that there is another world in which the followers of Christ shall receive a recompence of incalculable value and everlasting duration, they would have continued equally insensible, and as much attached to earthly vanities, although by the particularity of the description, the veil had been drawn aside, and it had stood disclosed, as it were, to the eye.

Having taken a general view of the instructions of Christ, I proceed to lay before you some characters or properties by which they are distinguished, and he is proved to be superior to all other teachers.

The first particular to which I request your attention, is their fulness or completeness; for, although there are some points, as we have shown, which he has passed over in silence, there is nothing wanting in his instructions as a system of religious truth. To be convinced of this fact, we must take into consideration the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as constituting a whole; for such they are, having been dictated by one Spirit, and intended to promote one design. When we call them two revelations, we express ourselves inaccurately if we mean that they are different in the subject of which they treat; for it is one religion, varying only in its external form, which is taught from the beginning to the end of the Bible. Were we to separate the Old and the New Testament, and to examine them as distinct and independent revelations, we might find defects in the former; but what is wanting in the one is supplied in the other, and both taken together constitute the word of Christ. In like manner, if we were to consider by itself the revelation made by our Saviour in person, it also might appear to us deficient, for he had many things to say to his disciples which they were not then able to bear, of which, however, they were afterwards informed when the Spirit came and led them into all the truth. I have no doubt that the New Testament alone is sufficient for salvation, as it contains the whole gospel, or all that can be known concerning the gracious purposes of God; but when I speak of the fulness of our Saviour's instructions, I refer also to the Old Testament, of which the histories and prophecies and devotional compositions are so useful and edifying to the church. What I affirm is, that he has made a perfect revelation of the will of God, using the term *perfect* in a relative sense, as importing that it is fully adapted to its design. As much light is let in upon the mind as is suited to its present capacity and circumstances. We may learn from the Scriptures all the truths which we ought to know, and all the duties which we are bound to perform; we may find the way to heaven, and receive all the directions and assistance which we need in pursuing our journey to it. While vain curiosity is checked, humble inquiries are encouraged, and the means of satisfying them are provided. Whosoever sits down at the feet of Christ and receives his law, shall be made wise unto salvation.

"I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things."* These words have no authority in themselves, as they were spoken by an ignorant, heretical woman; but they prove the state of opinion among the Samaritans, and no doubt also of the Jews. There was a general expectation that the Messiah would solve all questions in religion, and make a clearer and more perfect revelation than was then enjoyed. When Moses, by the order of God, had given laws and ordinances to his countrymen to regulate their worship and obedience, he added, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me."† Whether we conceive Jesus Christ alone to be meant, or the words to have a double sense, and to refer, in the first instance to a succession of prophets, and ultimately to him, they manifestly implied, that new communications of the Divine will would be made. When the ministry of the prophets came to a close, the Jews received a commandment to adhere steadfastly to the law which was published from Sinai, but at the same time were directed to look for a dispensation of greater light. Hence the last of them closes his book with a prediction of the appearance of the Sun of Righteousness, and of his forerunner who would prepare the people for the day of the Lord. When the Baptist came, and the eyes of all men were turned to him, he told them of another, whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose, and who would excel him in doctrine, as well as in dignity of person. "He that cometh from above, is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth."‡ But there is no intimation of another divine messenger after Jesus Christ, to supply what may be wanting, or to illuminate what may be dark in his revelation. By the books of the New Testament the canon is completed. God, when he spoke to us by his Son, spoke for the last time. The spirit of inspiration is withdrawn from the church, and men must henceforth walk by the rule of the written word. This is a proof of the fulness of revelation. It is not because God is less attentive than in former times to the interests of mankind, that

* John iv. 25. † Deut. xviii. 15. ‡ John iii. 31, 32.

he no longer sends extraordinary messengers, but because the revelation which he has already given is sufficient. The Scriptures are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and are able to make us "perfect, and thoroughly to furnish us unto all good works."*

It is on the ground of the fulness or perfection of the instructions of Jesus Christ as prophet, that we are commanded to hear him alone, and to call no man master or teacher. If there were any defect in revelation, it would not be a crime to endeavour to supply it by the efforts of our own reason, or by having recourse to the superior wisdom of others. The undue stress which is sometimes laid upon human authority in religion, betrays the want of proper respect for the claims of our Saviour to the implicit and unreserved confidence of his professed disciples. The church of Rome, by admitting traditions as a part of the rule of faith, and placing them on a level with the dictates of inspiration, pronounces the Scriptures to be imperfect, and is as manifestly guilty of setting aside the prophetical office of Christ, as she is of setting aside his priestly office when she exalts the glorified saints to the rank of intercessors with God.

The second particular which is worthy of attention, is the perspicuity of his instructions. In ascribing this property to them, I wish it to be understood that I do not apply it to every part of them, but to the Scriptures considered as a whole. The revelation of Jesus Christ, taken as a whole, is perspicuous; that is, it communicates distinct and satisfactory information respecting all the subjects which it interests us to know. Some parts of it, when viewed by themselves, are obscure. This is the general character of the Old Testament, so far as it speaks of future things, whether they relate to Christ himself and his work, or to the events which were to befal his church to the end of the world. This obscurity may be said to have been intentional, it being the design of God not to give more light than was adapted to the circumstances of mankind. You will perceive that his wisdom required that a clear and minute statement of future things should not be given, for various reasons, and particularly that there might be no interference with the free agency of men, who were to be instruments, and, in many cases, the unconscious instruments, of fulfilling his will. But these obscurities, and particularly those which relate to the Messiah, are cleared up in other parts of revelation; for what was formerly the subject of prediction, is now the subject of history. The incongruities which seemed to be in his character, while at one time he was described as a man of sorrows, and at another as a mighty conqueror; at one time as dying, and at another as enjoying immortal life, are explained in the gospels, and are seen to harmonize in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me."† There are obscurities, too, which arise from the nature of the subject. We cannot understand the doctrine of the Trinity, of the union of two natures in Christ, and of the operations of the Holy Ghost upon the soul; we cannot give an answer to several questions which are proposed with respect to the divine decrees, the agency of Providence, and the origin of evil. But before we make our ignorance an objection against the perfection of revelation, we should be certain that it proceeds from the suppression of information which might have been communicated, and not from our want of capacity. Of this, however, we are not certain; or rather, we have reason to believe that some of those subjects are beyond the comprehension of any created intellect, and that none of them could have been rendered intelligible to us in the present state of our faculties. The obscurity, therefore, which attends them, is no reproach to our Teacher, who has adapted his lessons to the ability of his scholars. He could have given a full explanation of them, for to him they are not mysteries; but to whom should he have addressed it? Not, surely, to us, in whose minds his words would have excited no ideas, and who should have been in the same situation with the prophet Daniel, who said, when in answer to his question the man clothed in linen declared the time of the end of the wonders, "I heard, but I understood not."

It is worthy of attention, that although in such cases the interior of the doctrines is enveloped in darkness which no eye can penetrate, the doctrines themselves are clearly revealed. No person who reads the Scriptures with attention and candour can doubt that there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead; that our nature and the divine are united in our Saviour; that God has fore-ordained all things which come to pass; and that men and all their actions are subject to the control of his providence. It is not necessary that we should be able to show how these things are, nor is it possible to conceive any moral purpose which such knowledge would promote; religion is concerned only with the facts; and these are stated in such a manner, that ingenuity is required, not to find, but to avoid finding them in the Scriptures. If it be true that the facts alone are of practical utility, and that a more intimate acquaintance with them would contribute nothing to their effect, our Lord has been sufficiently explicit; and, with respect even to these points, has fulfilled his duty as a prophet.

With regard to revelation, considered as a whole, and as intended to instruct us in religion, no man can reasonably complain of want of perspicuity. What is more plain, than that there is one God, possessed of every natural and moral perfection?—that he is the Creator, and Governor, and Judge of the human race?—that we are sinners, and his Son is our Saviour?—that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and now intercedes for us in heaven?—that we are justified through faith in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit?—that we are bound to yield obedience to his law?—that he will raise the dead, pronounce sentence upon the righteous and the wicked, and receive his faithful followers into his everlasting kingdom? These, and similar topics, which constitute the essence of religion, are expressed in the plainest manner, and are level to the lowest capacity. The unlearned may understand them—and even children may attain such a measure of knowledge as shall awaken the feelings and exercises of piety. No man can be a scholar or philosopher without superior talents, and many years spent in reading, and observation, and reflection; but to a disciple of Christ, nothing more is required than attention, humility, and prayer.

A third character of the instructions of Christ, is the authority with which they are delivered. The manner is not that of an ordinary teacher, who feels it incumbent upon him to prove what he says, but of a legislator, who commands. The first chapter of the Bible (for you will remember that the whole Scripture is the revelation of Christ, as I showed in my last lecture) furnishes a specimen. An event is there recorded, of which there could be no human witness, and about which, therefore, the ingenuity of men has displayed itself in the invention of a variety of theories. The history of the creation is not submitted by Moses to the judgment of the learned, but propounded as unquestionably true; not a single argument is advanced in support of the narrative; coming from the Creator himself, who revealed it to his servant, it de

* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. † Luke xxiv. 44.

mands the assent of all to whom it is published. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The same authoritative manner is apparent throughout the whole Scripture. It is seen in the ministry of the succeeding prophets. No hesitation is expressed, whether they foretell future events, or tender reproofs, or denounce threatenings, or inculcate duties. Their personal authority, indeed, was nothing, but they speak in the name of God; bearing his commission, they demand implicit obedience; and, if they ever condescend to reason, it is solely with a view to give greater force to their admonitions and intreaties. The Scriptures every where suggest the idea of a law, accompanied with many manifestations of grace, but speaking in the tone of command, and requiring submission as our duty.

The authoritative manner, however, is more fully displayed in the personal instructions of our Lord. There was necessarily some abatement in those of the prophets, who, being only his messengers, were under the necessity of appealing to their commission; but in him, authority assumed its most dignified character. While they spake in the name of God, he spake in his own name. It is true, that he also was the messenger of the Lord of Hosts; but he was of a different rank from all who had preceded him. He was the Son, as well as the servant of JEHOVAH, and, therefore, entitled to address mankind in a style which would have been unbecoming and presumptuous in a mere mortal; and, accordingly, if on some occasions he referred to his commission as attested by miracles, on others he spake as the oracle of truth. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," was the only argument which he usually assigned for his doctrines—the only reason which he alleged for demanding the assent and obedience of his hearers. "The people," we are told, were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."* This remark is made at the close of his sermon on the mount, throughout which he had spoken in a strain which might well astonish the hearers, because it was different from any thing to which they had been accustomed. The Scribes were regarded as persons of superior wisdom, and the people listened with reverence to these expounders of the law. He treated them as his inferiors, and, without hesitation or ceremony, set aside their maxims as false and licentious. To their instructions, supported as they were by the traditions of the elders, which they pretended to be of equal weight with the written word; to their instructions, which no man hitherto ventured to dispute, he opposed his simple affirmation: "It hath been said," or, "ye have heard that it was said to them of old," but 'I tell you the contrary.'

It is in consequence of the authority with which the instructions of Christ are delivered, that faith is prescribed as a duty. They are not exhibited as matters of speculation, to which we may assent or not, as we feel ourselves disposed. We are bound to believe them and to act upon them, from respect for him, as well as from a regard to our own interest. The gospel is called a law, because it is the will of a superior, and faith is called the obedience of faith. Unbelievers are guilty, not only of rejecting his proffered grace, but also of despising his authority. Hence, the commission which he gives to his apostles, and which authorises the ministry of the word to the end of the world, was enforced by this awful sanction: "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."†

The last particular which I shall mention, is the efficacy of his instructions. A power accompanies them, which was never exerted by human eloquence. "Is not my word as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"* We have a remarkable instance, in the effect produced upon the servants of the Jewish Sanhedrim, who were sent to apprehend our Saviour. They had, no doubt, imbibed the prejudices of their employers against him, and, at any rate, would have executed their commission in order to please them. When they came to the place, Jesus was addressing the people. But their attention was arrested by the sound of his voice; as they listened, their admiration was excited, and, forgetting the purpose for which they had come, they returned, exclaiming, to the no small mortification of the rulers, "Never man spake like this man!"† The efficacy of his instructions appears in the success which attended the preaching of his gospel in the primitive ages. Notwithstanding the obstacles which were opposed to it, it spread with such rapidity during the lives of the apostles, that it reached almost every part of the Roman empire, and even some nations lying beyond its frontiers; and, after their decease, it continued to make progress, although its path was marked with blood, till the whole civilized world submitted to its sway. The historian Gibbon has assigned five secondary causes, as he calls them, of its success; meaning, however, that they are the primary or only causes. His causes are obviously inadequate to the production of the effect, and every Christian must view, with triumph this abortive attempt to rob his religion of the honour of having established its dominion solely by the power of the truth. Its success is a fulfilment of the prophecy: "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."‡

Human eloquence, by moving the passions, may lead men to adopt new resolutions, and rouse them to sudden efforts of vigour; it may produce permanent effects in politics, in religious profession, and moral conduct, although, in the latter case, it must be acknowledged, that it has few triumphs to boast. The history of ancient times furnishes only one or two instances, which, if examined by a proper standard, would be found to be of no value. Shall these be brought into comparison with the innumerable trophies which the eloquence of our Divine Teacher has won?—with the thousands who, in obedience to his command, have renounced their prejudices, their pleasures, their gains, and their honours, and have submitted to a life of self-denial and suffering? Let us remember, that the word of Christ has prevailed to induce men, not only to embrace a new system of opinions, but to adopt a new manner of living; that it has purified them from their sins, and from sins which once seemed to be essential to their happiness; that it has effected such a revolution in their hearts, that the objects of their love and hatred are exchanged, and new tastes, and tempers, and feelings are displayed, as if they had been created again. As in the days of his flesh, when he said to any man, "Follow thou me," he forsook all and became his disciple, so it is now; the proudest humbly bow to his command; the most abject slave of the world, bursting his fetters, enters into his service; even the dead hear him and live; for the following words are verified in every age of the Church: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For, as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."‖

The efficacy of the instructions of Christ is connected with the operations of grace; and this natu-

* Matt. vii. 28, 29. † Mark xvi. 16.

* Jer. xxiii. 29. † John vii. 46. ‡ Ps. cx. 2, 3.
‖ John v. 25, 26.

rally leads me to remark, that as he teaches men by his word, so he also executes his prophetical office by the agency of the Holy Ghost on their minds. "He reveals to us," our Church says, "by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation."* Of this double teaching there is an illustrious promise in the Old Testament: "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."† The promise of the Spirit which our Lord made to his disciples, relates primarily to them, but authorizes the expectation of his presence and gracious operation in every age of the Church. Hence he is called the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ;‡ and the example of Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, encourages others to pray for his enlightening influences.

But if the Scriptures are a perfect rule of faith and manners, and are expressed with such perspicuity on all subjects essential to salvation, that even the illiterate may understand them, of what use is the Spirit?

In the first place, I remark, that it is not the office of the Spirit to give new revelations. Some, from mere ignorance conceiving that this is understood to be his office, and judging rightly that he is not wanted for any such purpose, have rejected the common doctrine of his operation in the soul. They may have been encouraged in their error by enthusiasts, who, boasting of the Spirit, have pretended to be favoured with supernatural discoveries, and have retailed their extravagant fancies as heavenly visions. But we expressly disclaim this view of the subject, and maintain that he is not sent to teach any thing new, but to enable us to understand in a spiritual manner the truths which are already revealed. In fact, we could hold no other opinion consistently with the principle which we avow, that the canon of Scripture is completed, and that all things are taught in it which are necessary to salvation. Whether God may not, for some important purpose, make known to individuals by his Spirit things secret and future, is a question which we presume not to decide; but such revelations are appropriated to the use of those individuals, and have no claim to the attention of others, unless they were authenticated by miracles; and wanting this attestation, are no more a part of the rule of faith and obedience than any mere human speculation.

In the second place, It is not the office of the Spirit to discover to us mysteries and recondite meanings of Scripture, which would have eluded the research of our unassisted faculties. I acknowledge that a man who has received the Holy Ghost, will understand many parts of the Scriptures better than those who have not received him; that he will perceive a beauty, and glory, and goodness in subjects which others regard with the greatest indifference; but I affirm at the same time, that there is no doctrine of religion, of which an unregenerated man may not acquire a speculative notion, by the exercise of his natural understanding. The practice of allegorizing the Scriptures, and affixing senses to them which do not present themselves to ordinary readers, have resulted rather from an affectation of ingenuity, than from any pretension to supernatural illumination. But some persons, mistaking the wild reveries of imagination for the motions of the Divine Spirit, have pretended to sublime discoveries, and brought to light concealed wonders; so that, if any credit were due to them, we should conclude, that truth indeed lies at the bottom of a well, dark and deep, where it must have for ever remained, if they had not been furnished with extraordinary means for drawing it up. There are mysteries in the Scriptures, which no man can explain; there are passages which it requires acuteness of intellect to explore; but in general they are expressed in simple terms, which are to be understood in their usual sense; and the only requisites for the successful study of them are attention and a moderate capacity.

The Holy Ghost teaches, by enabling the mind to perceive the truth, and excellence, and interesting nature of the doctrines of revelation. That his agency is needed for this purpose, none will deny but those who choose to give the lie direct to the Scriptures, and entertain an extravagant idea of the power of reason, which is at variance with the experience of all ages; for, whatever perspicacity reason has discovered in matters of science, it has shown itself to be blind as a mole in religion. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* There has been much disputing about the true sense of "the natural man," —ψυχικος ανθρωπος;—and an evident wish has been sometimes discovered to give such an explanation as should not represent the mind as wholly incapable, without divine assistance, of forming just views of supernatural truths. The man, of whom the Apostle speaks, has been called the sensual man, the animal man, the man who makes his senses, and passions, and prejudices the standard of judgment; and the character has been supposed to be realized in the heathen philosophers, who rejected the Gospel because it did not accord with their speculations. Whatever English term we may use in translating ψυχικος, the meaning is obvious to every person who is willing to see it. The natural is opposed to the spiritual man in the next verse; ψυχικος to πνευματικος. The same contrast is stated in the Epistle of Jude, who says of some, that they are ψυχικοι,† "having not the Spirit."‡ The natural man and the spiritual man are opposed to each other. They belong to different classes, and are distinguished by different qualities. The former has only the powers of nature, improved, it may be, by culture; the latter has received a supernatural gift. If you inquire, then, why the natural man cannot discover the things of the Spirit, or the truths of religion? the reason is, that he has not received the Spirit; whence it follows, that the agency of the Holy Ghost is necessary to the illumination of the mind; and this the Apostle plainly signifies when he adds, that the things of the Spirit are spiritually discerned, or can be rightly perceived only by a spiritual man. This single passage is sufficient to prove the necessity of the teaching of the Holy Ghost. The Scriptures, indeed, are said to be able to make us wise unto salvation; but their sufficiency consists solely in a complete exhibition of truth. Notwithstanding their fulness and clearness, they will make no man savingly wise, unless his understanding be opened to understand them, by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

The manner in which the Spirit acts upon the mind when he illuminates it, is unknown, as is the manner in which our Maker acts upon us, when he assists us in the natural exercise of our mental powers. The one is a mystery of grace, and the other a mystery of nature: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."‖

It is impossible to describe, except in general terms, the knowledge which believers acquire by the teaching of the Spirit, or to show, so as to make the distinction perfectly intelligible, the difference between

* Shorter Cat. Q. 24. † Is. lix. 21. ‡ Eph. i. 17.

* 1 Cor. ii. 14. † "Natural." ‡ Jude 19. ‖ John iii. 8.

this knowledge and that which is obtained by the unassisted exercise of our rational faculties. "No words," as I have elsewhere observed, "however carefully and copiously selected, could make a man, who had been born blind, form an idea of light. The views of divine things, which are obtained by the internal revelation, are clear and impressive. Hence, believers are said to "discern" spiritual things, to "behold with open or unveiled face the glory of the Lord, and to be changed into his image." Such evidence accompanies the truth, and such a manifestation is made of its excellence, that the mind feels the highest assurance, and embraces it with ardour and ineffable delight. The Christian enters upon a new scene, and sees around him objects, the grandest and most interesting, which awaken a train of feelings and affections never experienced before. The words of Scripture are the same which he had often read without any emotion, but the thoughts which they excite are exceedingly different. There is a living virtue in the language of inspiration which penetrates into the inmost recesses of his soul; exerts a commanding, transforming influence upon it, and fills it with light, and love, and hope, and activity. A similar change would take place if a man of a gross uncultivated mind were suddenly inspired with those refined perceptions, and that delicate sensibility, which are the foundation of taste. A new light would be poured upon the face of nature. The scenery at which he lately looked with a languid and careless eye, would present features of sublimity and beauty, by which his soul would be alternately filled with awe and delight. Where nothing formerly appeared but a variety of objects, distinguished only by their place and their form, he would now discover order, proportion, harmony, and grace."*

The degree of knowledge is different in different individuals. This is, no doubt, partly owing to a difference in mental capacity; for, without a miracle, a weak illiterate peasant could not take the same comprehensive view of the truths of religion as a scholar and a philosopher. It is not the intention, nor the effect of the operations of the Spirit, to equalize our natural faculties. We might assign, as another cause, the different degrees of diligence, with which the study of the Scriptures is pursued; for this is the promise: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."† We must remember, too, that the Spirit distributes his gifts according to his own will; that there is a sovereignty exercised with respect to the measures of grace, as well as the persons to whom it is communicated; and that this is the primary cause, that some so much excel others in all spiritual endowments. But the nature of this illumination is the same in all, in the lowest as in the highest believer. It imparts certainty to the mind; it discovers the excellence and goodness of the truths which are perceived; it is the foundation of faith and holiness, and consequently of final salvation. It is in this way, I apprehend, that we must account for the assurance which all Christians feel of the divine origin and authority of the Scriptures. The arguments by which we prove their inspiration are not generally known. Many have no opportunity of being acquainted with them; nor is every person capable of entering into a train of reasoning by which the several topics are illustrated and confirmed. Yet every believer regards the word of God with unsuspecting confidence as the ground of his hope, and is borne up under all his trials, and in the view of eternity, by its promises. Shall we charge the illiterate Christian with implicit faith? No; he has the witness in himself that the Scriptures are true. The marks of divinity which his enlightened mind perceives upon them, and the effects which they produce upon his conscience and heart, convince him that they are what they claim to be, as the sun manifests himself by his own light to every man who has eyes. They have come to him in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. Such was the conviction of the martyr, who declared that he could not reason for Christ, but could die for him.

The degree of knowledge which is necessary to salvation, it would be presumptuous to attempt to determine. We may say safely, that no man will be saved in ignorance; for the first effect of the gracious operations of the Spirit, is "to open the eyes;" that he must know himself to be a sinner, and Christ to be the Saviour; but farther we do not venture to proceed. It belongs not to us to fix the standard, and as, should we do so, there would be danger of its being too high or too low, so it would want all authority, because there is no determination of this kind in the Scriptures. In children whose faculties are beginning to open, and in adults who labour under mental imbecility, the measure of knowledge must be necessarily small. But a faint ray, imparted to the mind from the eternal source of wisdom, is of more value than the full blaze of reason and learning. The revelation vouchsafed to babes, and often denied to the wise and prudent, is sufficient to show the way to eternal life, and to guide them in it, notwithstanding insidious endeavours to draw them aside. "The way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err in it."

As the knowledge which the Spirit communicates is distinguished from other knowledge by its nature, so it is also by its effects. Other knowledge puffs up the mind with a vain conceit of its attainments; but this knowledge creates humility, not only by convincing us how little we know, but by giving a discovery of the guilt and vileness of our natural character. It likewise purifies the soul; for, while other knowledge is a mere exercise of intellect, this affects the heart, awakens new feelings, and tastes, and desires, inspires the love of God, and the noble ambition to be like him. It is a perception and relish of true excellence, consisting in the conformity of the creature to the moral image of its Maker. Hence our Saviour prayed, that his Father would "sanctify" his disciples "through the truth;"* and an apostle says, "that beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."† It imparts consolation and joy to the soul, while the enlightened man is fully persuaded of the precious promises of the Gospel, and regards its blessings as his own. And when we think of the ineffable satisfaction, the divine peace, the bright and animating hope, which are inspired by the contemplation of the wonders of redemption, we understand the reason that Paul "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord;" and that other holy men have expressed the highest esteem for this word, and a decided preference of it to the wealth, and pleasures, and glory of the world. In a word, this knowledge is introductory to the more sublime discoveries of the future state. The objects which will be contemplated there, are the same which are exhibited in the Gospel; and, so far as any man is enabled, by supernatural illumination, to form just conceptions of them, he anticipates the knowledge which will flow from the beatific vision. The difference is not in kind, but in degree. The one is the knowledge of a child; the other is the knowledge of a man. Wherever the light of heaven has once appeared, it will "shine more and more unto the perfect day," when the mists and clouds which now obscure our prospects will be dispelled, and we shall "know

* Sermons by the Author, Glasg. 1816, pp. 287—9.
† Hos. vi. 3.

* John xvii. 17. † 2 Cor. iii. 18.

even as we are known:" "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it."*

LECTURE LVI.

ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

The office of Priest—Necessity of this office of our Redeemer—Christ's call to, and investiture with it—Duties of the office; sacrifice, intercession, and blessing of the people—General observations on Christ's execution of these duties, and on his pre-eminence as a Priest.

Ever since the fall, the hopes of the human race have centred in the Messiah. He is the restorer of our fallen nature, the conqueror of our formidable adversary, the mediator by whose ministry peace with God is procured, the second Adam who has removed the curse pronounced upon us for the sin of the first, and opened the gates of paradise, that we might have access to the tree of life.

The design of the ceremonial institutions and the prophecies of the ancient law was, to make known this illustrious person, to describe his character, and to give notice of the purpose for which he would afterwards appear upon earth. Hence a general expectation of a great deliverer was excited; but the ideas which many entertained of him were the most distant imaginable from the truth. They believed indeed that he would be a prophet; for the words of Moses, and of other inspired men, were too express to be mistaken. They believed also that he would be a king, who, marching forth in the terror of his power, would subjugate the nations, and restore the kingdom to Israel. But they seem not to have believed that he would be a priest; or, if they allowed the title, they explained it in such a manner, as rendered it perfectly nugatory; nothing appearing to them more inconsistent with the office of the Messiah, than the proper work of such a priest, which was to redeem us to God by the sacrifice of himself. He was, however, not only to sit upon a throne, but also to minister at the altar; not only to exert his power for the destruction of his enemies, but to employ his interest with God in our behalf. He was to draw near to the Divine Majesty in our name, and to mediate a peace between us and our offended Creator.

That Jesus Christ is a priest, is plain from many passages of Scripture which it is unnecessary to quote; because, whatever difference of opinion there is among his professed followers with respect to the import of the title when given to him, they all acknowledge that there is a sense in which the office belongs to him. What we mean by calling him a priest, may be learned from the following definition of the character, although it does not comprehend every particular of the office. "Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."† It is to the last part of the definition that I at present request your attention. A priest is a person officiating in the name of others, who approaches to God to make atonement for them by sacrifice. The design of his ministration is to render the object of worship propitious, to avert his wrath from men, and to procure their restoration to his favour. He differs from a prophet, who treats with men in the name of God, making known to them his counsels and commands; while a priest treats with God in the name of men, to prevail upon him to admit them into friendship. It was in this sense of the word, that Aaron and his successors were priests. Their proper work was not to instruct the people, but to serve at the altar, and lay those oblations upon it which the law required for the expiation of sins. It cannot be denied that the title of priest is sometimes given to men not in a literal but in a figurative sense. Thus Christians are called a "royal priesthood,"* and are said to be "made priests" as well as "kings to God."† It is evident, however, that in this case there is merely an accommodation of the title, because they minister to God in the duties of religious worship, and present the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, which ascend with acceptance to his throne, like the smoke of rams and bullocks, and of the incense which was burnt in the sanctuary. A proper priest offers a proper sacrifice.

A question here demands our attention, because it has been the subject of much and vehement discussion among Christians, Whether it was necessary that our Redeemer should sustain this office? The negative is held by those who believe that God might have pardoned sin without a satisfaction; and the affirmative, by those who are persuaded that it would have been inconsistent with the purity and rectitude of his nature, to permit sin to pass with impunity. It is certain that God is represented as a Holy Being, as necessarily and infinitely holy, so that in the strong language of Scripture, "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity."‡ There is here an allusion to men, to whom some objects are so disgusting, that they avert their eyes and find it impossible to look at them without doing violence to their feelings. The divine abhorrence of sin could not be more emphatically stated than by this mode of expression. God can do every thing which is consistent with his essential perfections; he can do nothing which is contrary to them, and he cannot because he will not. It is not the want of physical but of moral power which is ascribed to him. Now, if it is impossible that God should ever regard sin with favour, it is impossible that he should suffer it to go unpunished; his nature forbids such an act of sovereign, unconditional mercy. To impress this idea, his holiness is represented as his "jealousy," or as accompanied with it. "He is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."‖ It is the nature of jealousy not to spare, and nothing but the execution of vengeance will satisfy its demands. This awful truth is declared in the solemn proclamation of his name, when he said that "He will by no means clear the guilty,"§—that is, the guilty for whom no atonement has been made. "God is jealous," says the prophet Nahum, "and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies."¶ It is to represent the punishment of the wicked as the consequence of his holiness, that our God is said to be a "consuming fire."** Fire, indeed, burns by necessity of nature—God does not so act in any external operation. His dispensations originate in his will; but his will is always conformable to his essential perfections. Is it not then plainly signified by this figurative description, that as fire consumes every combustible substance which it reaches, so the nature of God requires that the transgression of his law should be punished, unless some expedient be devised to reconcile the exercise of his mercy with the honour of his holiness?

Again, the necessity of the priesthood of Christ may be inferred from the justice of God. As there is an essential rectitude of his nature, in consequence of

* Rev. xxi. 23. † Heb. v. 1.

* 1 Pet. ii. 9. † Rev. i. 6. ‡ Hab. i. 13.
‖ Josh. xxiv. 19. § Exod. xxxiv. 7. ¶ Nahum i. 2.
** Deut. iv. 24.

which every thing which he does is right, sustaining the character of the moral Governor of the universe, he will render to all his creatures their due. Justice is ascribed to him in many passages of Scripture; and reason perceives so clearly that it belongs to him, that the question may be proposed as admitting only one answer, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* What it is right for him to do in the character of a Judge, we learn from the law which he has given to men, and in which death is denounced as the penalty of sin. Let it not be imagined that this is an arbitrary penalty; for, since it would be a reproach to a human legislator to subject crimes to a severer punishment than they deserved, or than was necessary to maintain the authority of his law, we could not impute such procedure to God without a direct impeachment of his benignity and clemency. It is right, therefore, that transgressors should suffer to the extent threatened in the law. There is something in their conduct which deserves this punishment; and it is suitable to the moral perfections of God to inflict it. Now, let us consider what is implied in the supposition that God might have pardoned sin without an atonement. It is implied, either that it was not right that sin should be punished, that is, that it was not absolutely right, that it was not agreeable to the nature of God, that justice did not demand it; or that, in order to exercise his mercy, he might do what was not right. It is impossible to maintain that sin might have been pardoned without an atonement, unless we at the same time affirm that punishment was not necessarily due to sin, or that God was not bound to recompense it according to its desert. If any man shall adopt the latter opinion, he must say, that what we call the justice of God is not justice, or that, when attributed to him and attributed to men, it has a different meaning. We always conceive justice, in a private or public person, to consist in treating others exactly according to their desert: and, consequently, it is equally contrary to justice to let merit go without reward, and demerit without punishment. If it be alleged that, although justice requires that the penalty of his law should be executed, he may set aside its claims by an act of authority, I would request you to consider attentively the import of this assumption. If justice has a claim, to dispense with it is to do something which, if justice would have been permitted to take its course, would not have been done. This is plain. Justice demands the punishment of sin—but the demand is not complied with, and therefore justice does not receive what is due to it. It follows, that to suppose that God may dispense with the claims of justice, is to suppose that he may cease to be just. Some men may not be alarmed at this consequence; but let it be observed that, if God may set aside in any case the demands of justice, justice is not essential to him; we can no longer have confidence in the rectitude of his moral administration; nor can his laws be regarded with the same reverence as when they were understood to be guarded by the immutable sanction of death. As the moral Governor of the universe, God is bound, if I may speak so, to maintain the respect due to himself by the strict distribution of rewards and punishments, and to hold out the most powerful motives to obey his law, which is not an arbitrary institution, but is founded on the relations subsisting between him and his creatures.

The inference from the preceding reasoning is, that the priesthood of Jesus Christ was necessary, if God was to pardon sinners, and receive them into favour. It is this hypothetical necessity alone which we assert; as his susception of the office was voluntary, so his investiture with it by his Father was an act of his sovereign grace. God was under no obligation to renew the intercourse between himself and man, which had ceased at the fall.

"No man," says Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."* The necessity of a divine call is manifest from the nature of the case. A priest ministers before God in the name of men, to effect a reconciliation between them. Now, although it is their interest which is connected with the office, and no advantage can redound from it to God, yet they have not the power of appointing the priest, for two reasons; first, because it depends solely upon the will of God whether a priest shall be admitted at all; and secondly, because it is his prerogative to declare who is acceptable to him, and proper to be entrusted with so important a work. "So also," the apostle adds, "Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."† Great as his love was to sinners, he interposed in their behalf only in concurrence with his Father, and in obedience to his will.

With respect to the time of his investiture with this office, it was coincident with his appointment to the general office of mediator. At that time, he was constituted the prophet, the priest, and the king of his Church. The manner of his consecration has been explained in different ways. He was consecrated, it has been said, at his baptism; and this is so far true, because he was then solemnly dedicated to the service of his Father; but he possessed the office before, and performed its duties, both by bearing our griefs and carrying our infirmities, while yet, in a private character, he led a life of poverty, labour and suffering of various kinds, and by the intercessory prayers which he no doubt offered up for the salvation of his people. It is the opinion of that eminent and learned divine, Dr. Owen, that he was consecrated by the shedding of his own blood, as Aaron and his sons were by the blood of the sacrifices; and this he conceives to be the import of the expression, "made perfect through sufferings."‡ But this notion we can by no means admit, because it seems to be absurd to suppose a person to be consecrated to an office, by doing the duties of it; to hold it, and proceed to perform its most important functions, before he is properly invested with it. His being "perfected through sufferings" evidently means, that, by his death upon the cross, he became the Captain or the Author of our salvation, having offered that atoning sacrifice, which obtained eternal redemption for us. It appears that he was consecrated by the oath of God, of which we shall afterwards speak, because it is an important fact in the history of his priesthood, and, as such, is mentioned in Scripture. "The law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."‖

The two great duties of the sacerdotal office, are sacrifice and intercession; to which may be added a third, the blessing of the people, as Aaron and his sons were commanded to do. I do not think it necessary to take any farther notice of the last in relation to our Saviour's office, because it does not appear that, as a priest, he blesses us in any other way than by dying to procure, and by obtaining, through his intercession, the communication of blessings to us. It is properly in the character of a king that he bestows them.

The first duty of his office he performed upon earth, when he presented to God the immaculate oblation of himself upon the cross. "He that loved us, and hath

* Gen. xviii. 25.

* Heb. v. 4. † Ib. 5.
‡ Heb. ii. 10. Owen on Heb. *in loco*. ‖ Heb. vii. 28.

given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour."* This would be the place to prove that the death of Christ was a true and proper sacrifice for sin; but I shall postpone this discussion to another occasion, as my design, in this lecture, is merely to give you a general view of his priesthood. There are some who deny that he offered a sacrifice for sin, namely, those who were formerly called Socinians, but now have taken the name of Unitarians. The doctrine of that heretical sect is, in substance, the following:—that Jesus Christ is called a priest, but is not such in reality; that he receives this title, on account of some resemblance between what he does, and the ministration of the priests under the law; that he is a priest, in the same metaphorical sense in which all Christians are said to be priests; and, that his priesthood solely consists in the good offices which he performs towards us, and on our account. He properly entered upon it when he ascended to heaven, and received power from his Father to assist men in working out their salvation; his death upon the cross was no part of his duty, but merely a preparation for the services of the heavenly sanctuary; his priestly office is virtually the same with the kingly, both implying authority and ability to bestow blessings upon men, and differing only in this respect, that, as a king, he has power to help us, and, as a priest, he is willing.—This was the doctrine of the elder Socinians, and has been generally adopted by their successors. I know not well what are the sentiments of the Unitarians of the present day; but some of them, "waxing worse and worse," like other "evil men and seducers," are actively employed in reducing the character of our Saviour lower and lower, and seem not to be able to tell where he now is, or what he is doing. I content myself, at present, with simply stating their doctrine, as an opportunity will afterwards occur, of showing its contrariety to Scripture.

There is another Socinian notion, which, however, has been adopted by some who are not Socinians, but believe that the death of Christ was a sacrifice for sin, namely, that he did not offer his sacrifice on earth, but in heaven, by appearing before God in the body in which he suffered on the cross. You will find this notion stated and defended by Dr. Macknight, in the notes on the Epistle to the Hebrews; an author, I may take this opportunity of saying, from whose work on the Epistles a cautious and discerning reader may derive considerable advantage, but who is a dangerous guide to young students, not only because he dogmatises in rather an unusual manner in matters of great importance, giving only his own affirmation for proof, but also, because many of his principles are false, and there are few who have distinguished themselves more by wresting and misinterpreting the Scriptures. This notion is at direct variance with the language of Scripture, which uniformly speaks of the sacrifice of Christ as having been offered before he entered into heaven. "Christ was once offered," says Paul, "to bear the sins of many,"† evidently meaning, that he was offered upon earth, because he contrasts this act with his future revelation from heaven. "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."‡ His sitting down at the right hand of God was immediately consequent upon his entrance into heaven, before which he had purged our sins by his sacrifice. "By his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption."‖ The obtaining of eternal redemption is put in the past tense,—ευραμενος,—and preceded his entrance into the holy place. But he obtained it, as all will acknowledge, by his sacrifice, which, therefore, was offered not in heaven, but upon earth. Great stress is laid upon these words of Paul, "If he were on earth, he should not be a priest."* But, if they furnish any evidence in favour of the present opinion, they prove more than its patrons would be willing to grant, namely, that while our Saviour was in this world, he was not a priest at all. This no man who believes the Scriptures would affirm. The meaning certainly is, that, if his office had been of the same kind with the priesthood which already existed upon earth, he could not have been a priest, because the office was vested in a family of which he was not a member; or that, if his whole office was to be executed upon earth, he must have been excluded, because, not belonging to the family of Aaron, he had no access to the holy of holies in the temple, in which alone his blood could be presented. The notion, that Christ offered his sacrifice in heaven, is one of those niceties which are sometimes brought forward as mighty discoveries, but which, although they were founded on truth, are of no practical utility. As it is, it overturns the ideas respecting sacrifices which men have entertained in all ages and nations, making them consist, not in the death of the victim, as has been always believed, but in the sprinkling of its blood; and it furnishes a pretext for those who are so minded, to deny that Christ offered any proper sacrifice, and to affirm that his whole work consists in intercession.

The second duty of his office is intercession. It was typified by the entrance of the high priest into the most holy place, where he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices, and burned incense before the mercy-seat; and it is carried on in heaven, of which that place was a figure. What is the nature of his intercession, how it is conducted, who are its subjects, and what is its design, are points, the consideration of which I shall reserve for another occasion.† According to the scheme of the elder Socinians, his priestly office was executed in heaven alone; but, although they could not deny that intercession belonged to his office, they explained even it away, as well as his sacrifice, and affirmed, that it signified merely that he obtained from God the power by which he is able to help us, as if he had prayed for it. A similar scheme has been contrived by some modern Socinians, which may be stated in the words of a celebrated writer. "Jesus Christ has not only taught the pure doctrines of the gospel; manifested, by rising from the dead, the certainty of a future state, and proposed to mankind a pattern for imitation; but has, by the merits of his obedience, obtained, through his intercession, as a reward, a kingdom or government over the world, whereby he is enabled to bestow pardon and final happiness upon all who will accept them on the terms of sincere repentance. That is, in other words, we receive salvation through a mediator; the mediation conducted through intercession; and that intercession successful, in recompence of the meritorious obedience of our Redeemer."‡ In this scheme, the atonement is left out, and our salvation is owing to the death of Christ only remotely, as it constituted the ground on which he obtained, by his prayers, power to save such as should sincerely embrace his religion. But his intercession has a different object, as we shall afterwards show.

Our Lord was made a priest "after the order of Melchisedec."‖ The apostle Paul explains what is meant, when he says of Melchisedec, that he was "without father, without mother, without descent," and that "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, he abideth a priest continually."§ It is certain that, being a man, he was born and died like other men, and had a genealogy which was known to his contemporaries; but Paul refers to his history, which on these subjects

* Eph. v. 2. † Heb. ix. 28. ‡ Heb. i. 3. ‖ Heb. ix. 12.

* Heb. viii. 4. † See Lecture LIX.
‡ Magee on Atonement, vol. i. p. 20. ‖ Heb. v. 6.
§ Heb. vii. 3.

preserves profound silence, and speaks of him only in his public character, and in relation to his office. He is an insulated individual, like a man fallen from the clouds, who had no earthly connexions, except that, as he was a priest and a king, there must have been persons for whom he ministered, and over whom he reigned. The similitude between our Saviour and Melchisedec may be traced in the two following particulars.

First, He had no predecessor in office. He was indeed made a priest after the order of Melchisedec; but you are not to understand that he was a priest of the same order, because, on this supposition, the resemblance between them would be destroyed in an essential particular. Christ did not succeed Melchisedec, but he is like him; and like him in this respect, that none was before him. Aaron and his sons were not his predecessors; for he could not have succeeded them unless he had belonged to the family to which the legal priesthood was confined by the express commandment of God. "It is evident," says Paul, "that our Lord sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood."* He succeeded them, indeed, as the antitype succeeds the type; but his priesthood was of a different kind. Theirs was a shadow, but his was the truth; theirs consisted in offering animals upon the altar, but his in offering himself; theirs averted temporal punishments from the Israelites, but his has delivered mankind from the guilt of sin, and from eternal perdition.

Secondly, Jesus Christ has no successor in the priesthood. It is in the perpetuity of his office that the resemblance between him and Melchisedec principally consists. When Aaron died, Eleazar his son stood up in his room; and all the high-priests of that family were succeeded by their sons and relations, till the second temple was destroyed; but no person will ever succeed our Saviour: and this difference between him and the priests of the law, was founded on two important circumstances:—

In the first place, "They truly were many priests," as Paul says, "because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death."† Notwithstanding the great dignity of their office, and the solemnities with which they were installed in it, they were but men, subject to infirmity and dissolution, like the persons for whom they ministered. "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."‡ He likewise died; but the cases were totally dissimilar. The legal priests died, if I may speak so, out of office; but he died in it. Death was no part of their work, whereas to die was the chief duty incumbent upon him. When they fell under the power of death, they could not extricate themselves from it, and return to life and the service of the sanctuary; but he had power to lay down his life and to take it again. Death was so far from putting an end to his priesthood, that it did not even interrupt the exercise of it.

In the second place, A succession of the legal priests was necessary, because the sacrifices which they offered could not expiate sin. Notwithstanding their mortality, if any of them could have appeased divine justice by his oblations, there would have been no necessity that another should rise up in his stead. But the legal sacrifices could not atone for past sins, and still less for those which were future; the blood of an irrational animal was not equivalent to the blood and life of the transgressor himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ "hath by one offering for ever perfected them that were sanctified."‖ His sacrifice removed the sins of his people in one day; it established, upon a solid basis, peace between God and his offending creatures; it is the ground of an everlasting dispensation of pardon and mercy. Hence it appears that there was no reason why another priest should succeed him, and that no place was left for the ministrations of another, which could serve no valuable purpose, as the great design of the office had been already accomplished, namely, the expiation of sin.

The death of Christ was a sacrifice, not for one generation alone, but for men in every age. He ever lives to make intercession in the heavenly sanctuary; and hence he is "able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him."* No other priest, therefore, can arise. There remains nothing for him to do. Christ has made sacrifice and oblation to cease, and has gone into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us.

It is derogatory to the honour of Christ, and subversive of the doctrine of the Scripture concerning his priesthood, to maintain that any person is now invested with the priestly office, and performs its proper work. It implies that he did not fully accomplish the design of his office, and destroys the resemblance between him and Melchisedec. Yet the church of Rome calls her ministers priests; (and so likewise does the church of England, from an imitation which is the more inexcusable, as she rejects the doctrine upon which alone an argument could be founded for giving them this title;)—the church of Rome calls her ministers priests, and affirms that they perform the proper work of the priesthood by offering sacrifice. Jesus Christ, into whose body and blood the bread and wine in the eucharist are transubstantiated, is offered up in the mass by the officiating minister, as a sacrifice for the dead and the living. If this opinion were true, the ministers of antichrist would be more truly priests than Aaron and his sons; because the latter offered only typical sacrifices, while the former daily repeat the great sacrifice which procures eternal redemption. But this superstructure rests upon a foundation of sand. The sacred supper is merely a commemorative ordinance. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."† The Christian religion acknowledges only one priest, who was consecrated by God himself, and is exalted to heaven. Those who assume this character encroach upon his prerogative; and to suppose them to be what they pretend, would be to consider our Redeemer as a priest, not after the order of Melchisedec, but after the order of Aaron, which admitted successors.

Jesus Christ excelled all that were before him in respect of the order of his priesthood. There are other points of difference, from which it appears that, according to the words of an apostle, "he has obtained a more excellent ministry,"‡ and of which I shall briefly take notice in the sequel of this lecture.

First, He was superior to all other priests in personal dignity. They were "men having infirmity," subject to disease and death, and not to these alone, but also to error and sin; and therefore they needed to offer for themselves as well as for the people. How much superior is our High-priest! Considered as a man, he is distinguished from all other men, not only by his miraculous conception, his sublime wisdom, and his stupendous works, but by his immaculate purity, which he retained amidst the strongest temptations. But besides his pre-eminence in moral worth, he was still more exalted above all who might be compared with him, by the dignity of his nature, for in consequence of his mysterious union to the second person of the Trinity, he was truly the Son of God. While he is said to have "purged our sins," he is described as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and as upholding all things by the word of his power."‖ Surely, he is the most glorious of all the ministers of God! and the office derives a lustre from him who sustained it.

* Heb. vii. 14. † Ib. vii. 23. ‡ Ib. vii. 24. ‖ Ib. x. 14.

* Heb. vii. 25. † Ibid. ix. 28. ‡ Ibid. viii. 6. ‖ Ibid. i. 3

Secondly, the manner in which he was invested with his office was peculiar; and it is expressly mentioned in order to demonstrate his superiority. "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made a priest, (for those priests were made without an oath, but this with an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec,) by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant."* This circumstance alone is sufficient to prove the pre-eminence of his priesthood. It is not upon slight occasions that God interposes by an oath; and if he did not swear when Aaron and his sons were set apart to the service of the altar, but observed this unusual solemnity in the consecration of his Son, may we not conclude that there were interests of far greater importance depending upon his ministry? The design of the priesthood of Aaron was to prevent the dissolution of the covenant, which God had made with the Israelites. The design of the priesthood of Christ was the establishment of a better covenant, by which God would be glorified, and our lost world redeemed. The oath was intended to assure us that God himself invested him with the office; that as a priest he is the object of his highest approbation; that he will never take the priesthood from him, nor cease to be pleased with the atonement which he made by the effusion of his blood. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent."

Thirdly, The oblation which he presented was far more valuable than the ancient sacrifices. He offered not the firstlings of the flock, and the choicest of the herd, but himself. He was at once the priest and the sacrifice. What raised the worth of his sacrifice above all calculation was his personal dignity, of which we have already spoken. He who was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem was the Lord of glory, although the princes of this world did not recognize him in such profound humiliation; the blood with which the church was redeemed was the blood of God, although the priests and rulers of the Jews, who saw it streaming from his wounds, despised it as the blood of an impious malefactor. The Godhead, it is acknowledged, is impassible; but from the union of the two natures of Christ, there resulted a communication of properties, in consequence of which the acts of both belonged to the same person, and are predicated of each other. That nature died which alone could die; but it was the nature of him who was higher than the kings of the earth and the angels of heaven, because he and his Father are one. Compared with this oblation, those which were offered with such pomp in the temple of Jerusalem were weak and childish things, and would be altogether unworthy of notice, were it not that God himself appointed them, and that they derived a borrowed importance from their typical relation to the sacrifice of Christ, the only sacrifice which God ever accepted for its own sake, and which satisfied the demands of his justice. Accordingly, the legal sacrifices are declared to be inefficient, and are laid aside, while the sacrifice of Christ is substituted in their room. "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo! I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first," says the apostle, "that he may establish the second."†

Fourthly, Let us observe for whom Jesus Christ officiated as a priest. The sacrifices of the Mosaic law were appointed for the Israelites; the annual atonement was made for none but the twelve tribes, and their names alone were engraven on the breastplate which the High-priest wore when he went into the holy of holies. Jesus Christ is the High-priest of the human race, and his blood was shed for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. "He is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world."* He suffered, therefore, not in the temple which was the sanctuary of the Jews, nor within the precincts of Jerusalem, the capital of their country, lest it should be imagined that they were the sole objects of redemption, but without the gates of the city, to signify that he was the Saviour of mankind, and that there was salvation through his cross to those who should turn their eyes to him from the ends of the earth. We do not affirm that he died for every individual of the human race. This extent some have assigned to his atonement; but, although it is their design to give a magnificent idea of its efficacy, their doctrine is really derogatory to its excellence. For upon this supposition it will follow, that as every individual is not saved, his sacrifice has failed of its end in the case of those who perish in guilt, and his blood has been shed in vain. He died for those whom his Father gave to him; but how great their number is, no man can tell. All ages have experienced the benefit of his death, the influence of which was retrospective and prospective, extending backward to the beginning of time, and forward to its close. For his sake God was merciful to those who lived before his coming in the flesh, pardoning them in the view of the satisfaction to be afterwards made; and now we know that there is salvation in no other, and that there is not another name under heaven given among men, by which they can be saved.

Lastly, The effect of his sacrifice demonstrates its transcendent excellence. No person, who has just notions of the evil and demerit of sin, can believe that the sacrifices of the law could appease the justice of God, and obtain his favour to the guilty. Reason gives a ready assent to the declaration of an apostle, that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."† Their sole effect was to deliver the offerer from temporal punishment, whether to be inflicted by the civil magistrate or by the hand of God himself. He was permitted to live, and to enjoy his privileges, although he deserved to be cut off for his transgression from among his people. But he had no security against eternal condemnation, and fell under it at death, if he had not an interest by faith in that better sacrifice, of which those which he had presented were merely shadows. The oblation of Christ satisfied every demand of justice, and cancelled the sentence pronounced by the moral law upon all who have violated its precepts: "He finished the transgression, and made an end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness."‡ Hence forgiveness is preached through him; and those who believe "are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses."‖ Nothing is necessary to our full pardon, but faith in the great propitiation; no supplementary penances of our own, no kind of satisfactory works. A foundation is thus laid for perfect peace of mind; and the only reason that believers do not always enjoy it, is the weakness and unsteadiness of their faith. No purpose of vengeance against them ever arises in the mind of God, however great are their provocations. He may frown upon them; but it is the frown of a father, who will not cast off his son, although he is displeased with his conduct; he may chasten, but it is the hand of love which wields the rod, and the design of every stroke is the good of the sufferer.

It appears from what has been said, that the priesthood of Christ is not a speculative point, but a doctrine intimately connected with our duties and our hopes.

* Heb. vii. 20—22. † Ibid. x. 5—9.

* 1 John ii. 2. † Heb. x. 4. ‡ Dan. ix. 24. ‖ Acts xiii. 39.

It is the foundation of all acceptable religion; and had he not sustained this office, intercourse between heaven and earth would have been for ever suspended, and God and men would have been separated by irreconcilable hostility. The religion of man in a state of innocence was founded on the natural relations subsisting between him and his Creator, to whom, as the author of his being, he owed obedience, and from whose goodness he was authorized to hope for felicity continued through an endless duration. But when sin had introduced mutual alienation, the interposition of a third party was necessary to adjust their opposing interests, and to unite them in the bond of friendship. As God can thus be merciful without ceasing to be just, so the way is prepared for the acceptance of our duties, notwithstanding the imperfections with which they are attended. Coming from us, who are so polluted that every thing is tainted which we touch, they are unworthy of the divine regard; but they are purified by passing through the hands of "the Minister of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not men."* This is an unspeakable advantage which Christians derive from the priesthood of Christ; for, although they should multiply their services, and perform them with assiduity and earnestness, they would not be pleasing to God, if he did not recommend them. As, while the sword of the cherubim waved dreadfully before the gate of paradise, our first parents could not have forced their way to the tree of life, the seat of immortality; so, the curse of the broken law rendered access to the throne of grace equally impossible to us their descendants; but Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life," or the true and living way; and "having him as our High-priest over the house of God, we may draw near with true hearts in the full assurance of faith."

LECTURE LVII.

ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

Death of Christ, a propitiatory Sacrifice—Socinian View of his Death; Its Defects—The middle Scheme: Objections to it—Proof of the catholic Doctrine—The Idea of sacrificial Atonement prevalent among the Heathen—Sacrifices of Atonement, a Part of the Jewish Worship—Import of the Language of Scripture respecting the Death of Christ.

The death of Christ is one of the most remarkable events recorded in history. Many ages before it happened, it was foretold by those men whom God raised up to uphold the authority of his law among his chosen people, and to direct their thoughts and expectations to a future and more perfect dispensation. David, Isaiah, and Daniel described the Messiah not only as a person of high dignity, and the Author of the most glorious works, but also as one who should lead a lowly and afflicted life, and terminate his labours and sorrows by a painful and violent death. The cause or occasion of it was singular; for it was not the effect of accident, or disease, or the decay of nature, but was inflicted by a judicial sentence pronounced upon him for the supposed crimes of imposture and blasphemy. The obscuration of the sun at mid-day without any natural cause, the earthquake which clove asunder the rocks and laid open the graves, and the rending of the veil of the temple from top to bottom, proclaimed that he who was hanging on the cross was no ordinary sufferer. He had not lain three full days in the grave, when he was restored to life by the power of God; and, after an interval of a few weeks, he ascended to heaven in presence of his disciples. Ten days after, he poured out the Holy Ghost, by whom they were enabled to publish to men of every nation, in their respective languages, the wonders of his death and resurrection; and the effect was not less surprising than the means employed to accomplish it. The attention of Jews and Gentiles was excited; multitudes were prevailed upon to acknowledge him to be the Son of God, and the Messiah; and a church was formed, which, notwithstanding powerful opposition and cruel persecution, subsists at the present hour. The death of Christ was the great subject on which the apostles were commanded to preach, although it was known beforehand, that it would be offensive to all classes of men; and they actually made it the chosen theme of their discourses. "I determined," Paul says, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."* An ordinance was appointed by our Saviour himself on the night preceding his crucifixion, for the express purpose of being a memorial of it to the end of the world. In the New Testament, his death is represented as an event of the greatest importance,—as a fact on which Christianity rests,—as the only ground of hope to the guilty,—as the only source of peace and consolation,—as, of all motives, the most powerful, to excite us to mortify sin, and to devote ourselves to the service of God. It is remembered in heaven, and we have reason to believe that it now is, and ever will be, the theme of the songs both of the redeemed and of angels: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and strength, and glory, and blessing."†

It is evident from this detail, that there is something peculiar in the death of Christ, something which distinguishes it from all other events of the same kind, and renders it more worthy of attention. It is necessary, therefore, that we should entertain just conceptions of it; by which I do not merely mean, that we should know when it happened, and with what circumstances it was attended, but that we should endeavour to ascertain from the Scriptures what was our Saviour's design in submitting to die upon the cross. From the earliest ages Christians have believed that his death was an atonement for sin, a sacrifice offered to God to satisfy his justice, and avert his wrath from the guilty; that it was the means of reconciling us to our offended Creator, the procuring cause of pardon and eternal life. In this view of it, all the great bodies into which professed Christians are divided are agreed,—the Eastern and the Western Church, Papists and Protestants, Calvinists and Arminians. They may differ in their explanation of the nature of the atonement, its extent, and the means of its application; but with regard to the general truth, that the death of Christ was propitiatory, there is no conflict of opinion. This may be considered as a presumption in favour of the doctrine, and at least shows that there is an apparent foundation for it in the Scriptures; because if there were no trace of it there, we could not well account for the consent of so many parties, separated on other points by so wide an interval. It will hardly be denied, that the Scriptures seem to favour this view, by using language, in speaking of his death, which was appropriated to the sacrificial institutions of the law; and those whose interest it is to evade this evidence, confess its existence by their anxious and violent endeavours to bring the style of the New Testament to a consistency with their system.

The doctrine which has been received by the Catholic church, is controverted by one class of nominal Christians, by the same persons who deny the divinity of our Saviour, and maintain his simple humanity. Those two articles of their creed harmonize, for if Jesus Christ was a mere man, it is impossible to believe that his death possessed such merit as to redeem that great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. They alone

* Heb. viii. 2.

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. † Rev. v. 12.

can with any appearance of reason consider his death as an expiation of sin, who are persuaded that the blood shed upon Calvary was divine. It would be absurd to suppose, that the sufferings of a common descendant of Adam, who was himself not exempt from human frailties and imperfections, were accepted as a full compensation for myriads of transgressions. The following is a summary of the sentiments of Unitarians.

"The great object of the mission and death of Christ, was to give the fullest proof of a state of retribution, in order to supply the strongest motive to virtue; and the making an express regard to the doctrine of a resurrection to immortal life, the principal sanction of the laws of virtue, is an advantage peculiar to Christianity. By this advantage the gospel reforms the world, and the remission of sin is consequent on reformation. For although there are some texts in which the pardon of sin seems to be represented as dispensed in consideration of the suffering, the merits, the resurrection, the life or the obedience of Christ, we cannot but conclude, upon a careful examination, that all those views of it are partial representations, and that according to the plain general tenor of Scripture, the pardon of sin is in reality always dispensed by the free mercy of God, upon account of man's personal virtue, a penitent upright heart, and a reformed exemplary life, without regard to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever." Thus the propitiatory nature of the death of Christ is discarded; and, according to them, when the Scripture says, that he gave himself for us, that he died for our sins, that we have redemption through his blood,—all that is intended is, that his doctrine, confirmed by his death, is the means of leading us to repentance and amendment of life, in consequence of which we are pardoned, and entitled to a happy immortality. It is a thought which will naturally occur to you, that if this is the actual amount of what the Scriptures teach upon this subject, the terms which the sacred writers have employed, serve only to encumber and darken the sense; and that it would have been better to have expressed the simple truth in plain terms not liable to be misunderstood, and not to have enveloped it in metaphors and allusions, by which thousands have been misled.

Let us attend more particularly to the account which is given of the death of Christ by those who deny the atonement, that having found their reasons to be inadequate, we may be the better prepared to receive the catholic doctrine, which alone accords with the statements of the sacred writers.

Sometimes they speak of his death as an accidental event, as having taken place in consequence of the wickedness and perverseness of the age in which he appeared, and thus insinuate that among a different people he might have escaped without persecution. How contrary this opinion is to truth, and to the belief of a particular providence, they need not to be told, who remember that he was delivered up by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, and that his death was predicted by the prophets, and prefigured by the institutions of the law. If it was accidental, it is evident that no stress can be laid upon it, that it could not be an essential part of the scheme of religion which God was carrying on, and that, in itself, it was of no greater moment than the death of any other good man who has fallen a victim to calumny and malignity.

There is a notion entertained by Socinians, which if true would militate against the supposition that the death of Christ ought to be considered as an atonement for sin, or that any merit attached to it; for they hold that death is not the penalty of transgression, but the consequence of the original law of our nature. Man would have died, or might have died, although he had continued in innocence. When Jesus Christ therefore expired, we may apply to him the expression, which however common is very inaccurate, that he paid the last debt to nature: and since he was originally mortal, his death was not an act of choice, and could not be a voluntary sacrifice. I need not stop to refute this opinion, the falsity of which was demonstrated when we pointed out the effects of Adam's transgression. It is sufficient to repeat the well known words of the Apostle, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;"* and the words of our Lord, "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."†

But although Socinians have sometimes talked in this loose manner, that the death of Christ might excite as little attention as possible, yet they have found it necessary from the general tenor of Scripture, to admit that it had some important end, and have racked their invention in order to give a plausible account of it.

In the first place, They tell us that he died to give us an example of patience, resignation, faith and hope; and thus far they are countenanced by Scripture, which says, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps;"‡ and addresses this exhortation to us: "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind."‖ But the question is, Was this the only design of his sufferings? Does the giving of an example exhaust the meaning of the language of Scripture on this subject? We grant that he has left us an example, but we deny that this was the only object which he had in view; and we pronounce it to be false reasoning to hold any single end which is gained, to be the only end contemplated by the person who employed the means. Every man knows the distinction between a subordinate and an ultimate end, and is aware that, unless both be considered, we do not understand the design of the agent. If it was the sole purpose of the death of Christ, to give us an example, we cannot avoid thinking that the means were disproportionate to the end; and it seems incredible that a just and good Being would have subjected a person so excellent as Unitarians acknowledge him to have been, pure and spotless in his life, and richly furnished with supernatural gifts, to the most cruel torments, solely that we might learn how to behave under our afflictions. We might have been taught this lesson at less expense; and it does not appear to be a happy expedient for recommending submission, to place before us the spectacle of a person enduring the severest sufferings, although he had neither sinned himself, nor become responsible for the sins of others. The moral efficacy which is ascribed to the example, is destroyed by the nature of the case. Nothing will induce us to acquiesce in the will of God, when its operations are painful to our feelings, but a full conviction of his justice and benevolence. But the agony and blood of one who had never offended, are calculated to create fear and distrust, and to represent the Ruler of the universe, rather as a despot than as the Father of the human race.

In the second place, they tell us that he died to attest the truth of his doctrine. I grant that this is true, but in a sense which they will not allow. He died to confirm the promises of God, by paying the price of the blessings exhibited in them, and securing the enjoyment of them to believers. "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God."§ But his death had this effect, because it was an atonement for sin, by which the anger of God was appeased, and his favour was restored. I deny that he was a simple martyr for the truth, and is to be

* Rom. v. 12. † John x. 18. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 21.
‖ Ib. iv. 1. § 2 Cor. i. 20.

classed with Stephen, and James, and Antipas, and other holy men, who have sealed their testimony to religion with their blood. Considered in itself, his death would not have proved the truth of his doctrine; it would have proved only that he was fully persuaded of its truth. This is all that we can justly infer from the sacrifice which a man makes for his principles; if we go any farther, as there have been martyrs for different religions, we should be compelled to conclude that they are all equally true. It was not necessary that he should die to confirm his doctrine, because he had already established it upon the solid basis of his miracles. To these he appealed, saying, "Believe me for the very works' sake."* They demonstrate that he was a messenger from God, and consequently, that whatever he delivered in the name of God, was to be received without murmuring and disputing. They were admitted as evidence by all persons of candour, and with respect to those who were dissatisfied, we may say, that they would not have believed, although one had risen from the dead. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him."† Hence we conclude, that this was not the design of his death. His dying for the truth could not have afforded clearer evidence than his miracles, nor considered in itself, evidence so clear. What followed it, indeed, namely his resurrection, is the grand demonstration, that he was the object of the divine approbation; but it is so, because he was put to death as an impostor and blasphemer, and was not at all necessary, independently of these charges against him, to vindicate his claim to the character of a messenger from God. The proof was so complete before his last sufferings, that those who rejected him were without excuse, as we learn from his own words: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."‡

Once more, They tell us that he died to give us the assurance of eternal life, that we might be led to faith and obedience, through which we obtain the remission of sin. At first sight, it seems strange and far from the truth, that the painful and ignominious death of an innocent person should avail to persuade us, that a recompense is prepared in a future state for those who lead a holy life upon earth. Appearances are directly in the face of such an expectation. Aware of this difficulty, Socinus said that this hope, which exerts so happy an influence upon us, is not properly the effect of the death, but of the resurrection of Christ, and is ascribed to his death, because it necessarily preceded his resurrection. But if this were the truth, the Scripture would have made mention of his resurrection, or rather of his ascension to heaven, and his sitting at the right hand of God, when it speaks of the remission of sin, and not of his death and sufferings, at least not so often, and in such significant terms. The frequent, and almost constant, conjunction of his "blood" with remission, indicates that the latter is not a remote, but the proximate effect of it. To what purpose is this circuitous method? Remission is granted to those only who obey the commandments of God; faith, and the hope of a reward, as Socinus affirms, are motives and excitements to obedience; this faith is generated by the consideration of Christ raised from the dead, and exalted to glory on account of his holiness; but death preceded his resurrection, and therefore remission is fitly said to be obtained by his death. That which is near, or separated by a moderate interval, is not assigned as the cause, but that which is removed to a great distance from the effect; the first step in the process is given as the cause of the result, while it ought to be ascribed to the last step, which goes immediately before it; and this is done not once, but uniformly. Who can believe that the Scripture expresses itself so inaccurately and obscurely? To speak of his death when it means his resurrection, of which his death was not the cause but the antecedent, is just as proper as to speak of night when we mean day. A slight perusal of the sacred writings will convince any man who is not prejudiced, that this is not the true account. He will find that the remission of sin is not attributed to the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, or to the effect which these events are calculated to produce upon our minds, but expressly to his death; and that his death, as distinguished from his resurrection and exaltation, is stated to be the procuring cause of our redemption. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."* Our reconciliation, which implies the pardon of sin, was effected by his death, and not by the life which he now leads in heaven.

In a word, they tell us that Christ died in order to obtain the power of forgiving sin. But to this assertion we oppose the fact, that he possessed this power before his death: and it is absurd to suppose him to have died for the purpose of acquiring what was already his own. He repeatedly said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." It is observable that, on one occasion, he used these words, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins;"† as if he had meant to provide for the refutation of those who affirm that this power was subsequent to his ascension. He had power to forgive sins while he was on earth, in his state of humiliation; and that it does not signify, as some pretend, simply the power of healing diseases, will appear on consulting the passage, where there is a clear distinction between the pardon and the cure of the paralytic; the one having taken place before the other, and the cure being expressly declared to be the sign and confirmation of the pardon.

This view of the death of Christ, as the means of obtaining the power of forgiving sin, leads me to take notice of another theory, which has been called the middle scheme, because it admits more than the Socinian, and less than the Catholic system. This statement, however, is not perfectly accurate; because Socinus himself, and his immediate followers, who allowed to Jesus Christ supreme authority over men, held in substance the doctrine which has been supposed to be peculiar to the scheme now to be considered.

The middle scheme agrees with the Socinian in rejecting the atonement, but it accords thus far with the Catholic, that it maintains the intervention or mediation of Christ in a qualified sense, as necessary, or at least as appointed, for the restoration of the guilty to the favour of God. It proceeds upon this principle, that God, who is infinitely merciful, may pardon the transgressions of his creatures freely, and might have pardoned them upon repentance, but that it appeared expedient to his wisdom, and conducive to the interests of his moral government, to exercise his mercy to them, not immediately, but through the interposition of another person. This friendly office was performed by Jesus Christ, whom the abettors of this system do not consider as the eternal and consubstantial Son of God, but as the first and most glorious of created beings, by whom the world was made. Pitying our fallen race, he generously engaged to assume our nature, to submit to poverty and persecution, and to suffer crucifixion, that he might acquire the right and power to carry into effect his benevolent design. His services were highly acceptable to God; and in consideration of them, there has been granted to him, upon

* John xiv. 11. † Ib. iii. 2. ‡ Ib. xv. 22.

* Rom. v. 10. † Matt. ix. 6.

his intercession, a kingdom or government over men, authorising him to bestow pardon and eternal life upon those who repent and obey. In confirmation of their scheme, they appeal to certain cases mentioned in Scripture, as being analogous, and as evincing its conformity to the manner in which the Divine administration is conducted; to cases in which the sins of others were pardoned at the request of good men, and from respect to their virtues. Thus, great privileges were conferred upon the Israelites, to reward the piety and obedience of Abraham; the idolatry of the people in the wilderness was pardoned when Moses interceded for them; and God heard the prayer of Job for his three friends, against whom his anger was kindled, because they had not spoken of him the thing that was right.

As this system admits a Mediator, although it confines his duty to intercession founded on his previous sufferings, it enables its advocates to make a plausible use of the language of Scripture, and to say with truth, according to their limited views, that we are saved by the blood of Christ, that we are forgiven for his sake, that we are redeemed to God by the death of his Son. It seems also to guard the honour of the Divine government amidst the exercise of mercy, by not treating the sins of men as light and venial, and pardoning only from respect to the merits of a being of a higher order, through whom their repentance is accepted. It will occur, however, to your minds, that the Scriptural phrases concerning the death of Christ must be interpreted in a low sense, that they may be brought to accord with the scheme now under consideration. We are saved by the death of Christ, not as an atonement, for this idea is expressly excluded; but as a preliminary step to our salvation, or as the appointed means of obtaining the power to save us, or rather the power to prescribe the terms of our salvation. If it be said that this power was merited by his sufferings, and, consequently, that they are in truth the primary cause of salvation, we remark that, after all, no more is ascribed to them than might be ascribed to the sufferings of a mere man, on whose account some favour should be conferred upon his family and friends. He has received wounds or lost his life in the service of his country, and his country testifies its gratitude by rewarding those who are related to him. All the arguments drawn from the terms in which the death of Christ is spoken of, to prove its propitiatory nature against the Socinians, bear with equal force against the scheme of intercession. It is true, according to both systems, that he did not die as our Surety, and bear our sins in his own body on the tree. This scheme, in short, is an expedient which has been devised, not to interpret Scripture according to the genuine sense, but to explain it away; to evade, on the one hand, the obnoxious idea of atonement, and to seem, on the other hand, to attribute to our Saviour's death some powerful efficacy in our redemption from sin. It is liable to the objection against the Socinian system, that it does not satisfactorily account for the sufferings of an innocent person, as on all hands he is acknowledged to have been. It may display the goodness of God, but it reflects upon his justice, with which it is impossible to reconcile the sufferings which Christ underwent by Divine appointment, although he was free from personal or imputed guilt. In short, although it has been called a beautiful theory, it will not appear in this light to the man who thinks, and thinks justly, that the beauty of a moral system depends upon its truth; and to a person who has studied and understood his Bible, it will not have even the merit of speciousness, because, before it could impose upon him for a moment, he must have forgotten all that he had read.

I have said that it is an objection against this and the Socinian system, that they do not satisfactorily account for the death of an innocent person. That our Saviour was without sin, we may assume as an incontrovertible fact, upon the testimony of Scripture; and we reject with abhorrence the insinuation of modern Unitarians, who have dared to insinuate that, although his public life was blameless, he might not be exempt in private from the imperfections incident to humanity. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."* According to all our ideas of justice, an innocent person has a right to live in peace under the protection of the laws, and we should exclaim against the government which should molest him, as oppressive and tyrannical. Yet we are not surprised when such a person is persecuted by men, because we know by experience what are the fatal effects of calumny and envy, and how often power is abused from caprice, and ignorance, and passion. But, in heaven we look for a pure administration, and it is a principle of reason and religion, that the righteous are acceptable to the Ruler of the world, and are the objects of his peculiar care. The sufferings of our Lord did not originate solely from men; the agency of God was concerned in them, and they all, indeed, befel him either by his immediate interposition, or by his appointment and permission: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief."† Some tell us that, in virtue of his sovereignty and supreme dominion, God may subject his creatures to sufferings without a cause; that he is not bound to give an account of his proceedings to us; that, if an angel in heaven, or the holiest man upon earth, were severely afflicted, it would be sufficient to say, that such is his will. Were this doctrine admitted, our antagonists could explain the mystery of the cross without any difficulty. But those who hold it, have forgotten that the Lord of the universe is not a despot, but a righteous and beneficent Governor; they take a partial view of his character, and sink all his other perfections in that of his power. They have forgotten, too, that he has prescribed a law to himself, from which he will never deviate; a law expressly declaring that he will render to every man according to his deeds. Hence we conclude, with the utmost certainty, that when any being suffers there is a just cause. We are at no loss to account for the sufferings of men, whatever are their attainments in piety and virtue, knowing, as we do, that each of them is a sinner; but what reason shall we assign for the sufferings of Him, who was proclaimed by a voice from heaven to be the Son of God, in whom he was well pleased? Here both the systems which we have reviewed entirely fail. They give no explanation in which a well instructed mind can acquiesce. To say that Christ was subjected to sufferings for the benevolent purpose of conferring important benefits upon mankind, is to give the highest sanction to the principle, which is so strongly reprobated in the Scriptures, that evil may be done that good may come. To say that, although his sufferings were great, he has been amply rewarded for them, is to set up the plea, that a person may be treated unjustly in the mean time, provided that justice shall be done to him at last, and to vindicate any arbitrary exercise of power, if the victim of it is not an ultimate loser. Such a procedure would be condemned in a human governor, and is not to be attributed to Him who is the archetype of justice to kings and princes.

You have heard the reasons which are assigned for the death of Christ, by those who deny that it was an atonement for sin. If they have proved unsatisfactory, the doctrine of the catholic church remains unshaken; and it is a presumption in its favour, that all the attempts to substitute something better in its place have failed of success. Before, however, we are authorised

* 1 Pet. ii. 22. † Is. liii. 10.

to pronounce it to be true, we must ascertain that it is not only preferable to other views of the subject, but that it is agreeable to Scripture, from which only the real design of the death of Christ can be learned. It is not our business to contrive a variety of hypotheses, and try which of them is most suitable, but to inquire what our Saviour himself and his disciples have said upon this important subject.

I begin by observing, That the idea of atonement has prevailed among all nations and in every age of the world, and that, accordingly, sacrifices have been offered with the view of propitiating the Deity. From what source the idea and the practice were derived, is a question about which learned men have been divided in sentiment. Some have maintained that sacrifices were an invention of men, who hoped, by the offering of something valuable, to gain the favour of the Being whom they worshipped, as we seek to conciliate the good will of our superiors by gifts; and others contend that they originated in the command of God to our first parents after the fall. Without engaging in this controversy at present, I simply remark upon the improbability that a thought, apparently so extravagant, should have ever occurred to the human mind by its own suggestion, as that the wrath of Heaven would be appeased by the slaughter of unoffending animals. Whatever gave rise to this service, it is certain that such sacrifices held an important place in the religion of the heathens, and continue to be offered in one form or another, by idolatrous nations. Nay, in some cases, a nobler sacrifice was deemed necessary; a human victim was dragged to the altar; and the guilty hoped to wash away their own sins with the blood of one of their brethren. These things are mentioned to show, that a sense of guilt has been universally felt, accompanied with the fear of punishment, and that a persuasion has obtained, that there was no possibility of escaping with impunity, except by the suffering of another in the room of the transgressors. They are a proof that notwithstanding the loud exclamations against the atonement of Christ, as an impeachment of both the goodness and the justice of God, the human mind has, with great uniformity, approved of the idea of substitution, and has found in it the best resource against the terrors of conscience.

But this statement has been controverted, and it has been confidently affirmed, that, from a review of the religions of all nations, ancient and modern, they appear to be utterly destitute of any thing like a doctrine of proper atonement; that a general belief has prevailed of the benevolence of the Deity; and that nothing has been deemed necessary to conciliate his favour but repentance and the practice of virtue. The power of prejudice is great. It hides from the mind the plainest truths, and leads it to draw the most illogical conclusions; it reconciles it to palpable absurdities, and renders it impenetrable to the most cogent arguments. But there are some cases in which the utmost stretch of charity cannot admit the power of prejudice as an apology. It is impossible to believe, that a man of learning and good sense has been so blinded by its influence, as to mistake the whole history of mankind upon a particular point, and not to see what, to every other person, presents itself with the brightness of a sun-beam. Either Dr. Priestley, who has made the strange assertion which I am now considering, had never read the history of the various religions of the human race, and in this case was guilty of presumption and dishonesty in pronouncing positively concerning their tenets; or, he has published to the world, with a view to support his own system, what he must have known to be utterly false. It would disgrace a school-boy to say, that the heathens knew nothing of expiatory sacrifices. Dr. Magee has refuted his assertion by an induction of particulars, which show that it is destitute of the slightest foundation. He has proved, that, "a great part of the religion of the Pagan nations consisted in rites of deprecation; that fear of the Divine displeasure seems to have been the leading feature in their religious impressions; and that, in the diversity, the costliness, and the cruelty of their sacrifices, they sought to appease gods, to whose wrath they felt themselves exposed, from a consciousness of sin, unrelieved by any information respecting the means of escaping its effects."* Hence the practice of human sacrifices among, not only the Phenicians, the Persians, the Egyptians, and the Carthaginians, but also the learned Greeks, and the civilized Romans; and hence the doctrine of the Druids, as related by Cæsar in his Commentaries, that, unless the life of men were given for the life of men, the immortal gods would not be appeased.† The gods are often represented as angry, and the idea of propitiating them is expressed by a variety of terms. To turn away the wrath of another, was signified among the Greeks by the verbs ἱλασκεσθαι, ὑφιστασθαι, καταλασσειν, αποκαταλασσειν,‡ and among the Latins, by the words *placare*, *pacare*, *conciliare*, *reconciliare*, and *propitiare*.‖ The act and the effect were called by a single word in both languages; in the one ἱλασμος,§ and in the other *placamen*.§

I observe again, that prior to the coming of Christ, sacrifices were offered, not only of thanksgiving, but of atonement, by the worshippers of the true God, in obedience to his command. Such appears to have been the sacrifice of Abel, because it consisted of the firstlings of his flock; and that he had authority for what he did, we infer from the words of the apostle, who says, that he offered by faith,¶ which presupposes a Divine revelation. This single passage, independently of other considerations, might decide the question respecting the origin of sacrifices. Such are the sacrifices of Job for his sons, lest they should have sinned during the days of feasting; and for his friends, who had sinned in their speeches, and were directed by God himself to adopt this method of averting his anger. When the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, a law was given to them, enjoining sacrifices, appointing a particular family to the priesthood, ordering an altar to be built, and specifying the animals to be used, and the time and manner of offering them. When any of them had transgressed, a sacrifice was prescribed, upon offering which his sin was pardoned, and the penalty was remitted. There were sacrifices also for the whole congregation, in the morning and evening of every day, and on the anniversary of expiation, when the high priest officiated, and entered into the holy place with the blood of the victim, which he sprinkled before the mercy-seat, signifying that it was only through an atonement that God would continue to be gracious to the people. In a word, the whole system proclaimed and illustrated this truth, that "without the shedding of blood, there was no remission of sins."** No hope was given to the Israelites of the protection and blessing of the Almighty, unless they were purified by sacrifices. If it be said, that the death of animals without reason, could not satisfy Divine justice for the sins of men, we grant, that although they freed the offerer from ceremonial, they could not free him from moral guilt; but hence we infer, that the sacrifices of the law were shadows and figures of a nobler oblation, by which eternal redemption has been obtained.

We should have thought it so clear, that sacrifices were enjoined by the ancient law, and were of a propitiatory nature, that no person would have ventured to

* Magee on Atonement, Vol. i. No. 5.
† De Bello Gall. lib. vi.
‡ To propitiate, pacify, conciliate, reconcile.
‖ To appease, pacify, conciliate, reconcile, propitiate.
§ Propitiation. ¶ Heb. xi. 4. ** Ib. ix. 22.

dispute it; but it has been asserted, that the Jews had no notion of expiatory sacrifices; or that, if they had any such notion, it was derived from the heathens, contrary to the common opinion, that the heathens derived the notion from them. Nothing is more plainly taught in the Old and the New Testament, than that sacrifices were piacular. The idea is unavoidably suggested by the language of the law, and by the nature of the rites which it prescribed; and it is still retained by the Jews, although they are aware of the argument drawn from thence for the true and proper sacrifice of Christ, and would for this reason have been strongly tempted to renounce it. It is the doctrine of the modern Jews, that the mercy of God accepted the sacrifice of the animal in the room of the offerer, and appointed that in offering it, he should lay his hands upon it, to remind him that the victim was received as his vicarious substitute. In order to prove that the ancient sacrifices were not of an expiatory nature, it is alleged, that they were required in cases where no guilt could be supposed. In the cases of the high priest, the ruler, private individuals, and the whole congregation, a sacrifice was enjoined, when they had sinned through ignorance; and ignorance, it is insinuated, must have exempted them from criminality. Ignorance, however, may not signify the absolute want of knowledge, but inattention and inconsiderateness, which, being itself culpable, would not excuse the conduct to which it gave rise; or, if they were really ignorant, they were still to be blamed, because it was their duty to have made themselves thoroughly acquainted with the law which God had given them, and to have kept it constantly in mind. The truth seems to be, that the sins spoken of did not proceed *ex ignorantia juris*,* but from want of reflection, from the sudden assaults of temptation, and the violence of passion; and they are opposed to presumptuous sins, sins committed with a high hand, that is, deliberately, against knowledge, and the present conviction of the mind. The former are called sins as well as the latter; but this difference is made between them, that those were expiated by a sacrifice, whereas for these no atonement was provided. "If a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity. And he shall bring a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass-offering, unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his ignorance wherein he erred and wist it not, and it shall be forgiven him."† Again, sacrifices were required from those who had been cured of leprosy, and from women after child-bearing, and in neither case, it has been said, can sin be supposed. It is the observation of a Jewish writer,‡ that "without committing sin, no person is ever exposed to suffering; that it is a principle with the Jewish doctors, that there is no pain without crime; and that for this reason, she who had endured the pains of child-birth, was required to offer a piacular sacrifice." With regard to the leper, it has been remarked by the same person, that "a sin-offering was enjoined, because the whole Mosaic law being founded on this principle, that whatever befals any human creature, is the result of Providential appointment, the leper must consider his malady as a judicial infliction for some transgression."‖ And certainly the loathsome disease of his body was an emblem of the natural pollution of the soul, and reminded him how necessary it was to seek the favour of that Being who had smitten him once, and might smite him again. But, although a case had occurred, in which we could not discover any vestige of guilt, manifest or implied, it would not, in the judgment of any reasonable man, furnish an objection against the general import of the legal institutions, which so clearly teach, that an atonement is necessary to avert the anger of God.

I observe farther, That the Scriptures affirm, in the most express terms, that the death of Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice. They use the same language in speaking of that event, which is used concerning the piacular services of the law. He is called a priest, and the work of a priest is assigned to him. "Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore, it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer."* It is said, that "he gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour;"† and the same thing is asserted in many other passages. It is affirmed, that "he died for our sins according to the Scriptures;"‡ that "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree;"‖ that "he is the propitiation for our sins;"§ that "he was made a sin-offering for us;"¶ that "by his death we are reconciled to God;"** that "he has redeemed us to God by his blood."†† This is the general strain of the New Testament, and I am not aware of a single expression which has a different meaning. One should think, that language so express, and occurring in so many places, would be sufficient to settle the question, whether the death of Christ was of an expiatory nature, and that no man who feels any reverence for the word of God, and submits to it as the rule of his faith, would venture to controvert this position, or allow a doubt to remain in his mind. But some persons are not so easily satisfied. They have conceived a prejudice against the doctrine, and will not be convinced by any evidence. Hence they have recourse to the same expedient, by which they endeavour to set aside the proofs of the divinity of Christ, namely, the pretence that the words are not to be understood according to their usual import. They cannot deny that he is called a priest, and his death a sacrifice; but they allege that the literal sense must be rejected, for no reason which I can discover, except that it is at variance with their system. Christ, they say, was a metaphorical priest; his death was a metaphorical sacrifice; and what follows, but that he has obtained for us a metaphorical redemption, that is, no redemption at all?

As the Scriptures were given to instruct us in religion, it may be presumed that they are written in language which all may understand. To suppose that the style is highly figurative even in the didactic parts, that plain truths are wrapt up in metaphors, that the real is often different from the apparent sense, is to throw a most injurious reflection upon the word of God, and would justify the church of Rome in withholding it from the common people as a book liable to be abused by them. No person who has read the Old Testament, can be ignorant what is meant by a sacrifice. He understands it to have been a victim slain and offered upon the altar, in order to avert the anger and procure the favour of God. When he finds that, in the New Testament, the death of Christ is called a sacrifice, and considers that both parts of revelation proceeded from the same Author, he is necessarily led to believe that the word retains its ancient sense, and that Christ died in our room to reconcile us to God. We account him a blundering writer, who uses the same word upon the same occasion in different senses; and we call him an unfair writer, who, by changing the meaning without warning, seeks to impose upon his readers. To tell us that we ought to beware of being misled by the sound of words, and that, in the passages which speak of the death of Christ as a propitiatory oblation, nothing is intended but an

* From ignorance of what was right. † Lev. v. 17, 18.
‡ Abarbanel. ‖ See Magee, vol. i. Note 33.

* Heb. viii. 3. † Eph. v. 2. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 3.
‖ 1 Pet. ii. 24. § 1 John ii. 2. ¶ 2 Cor. v. 21.
** Rom. v. 10. †† Rev. v. 9.

allusion to the sacrifices of the law, is to tell us that we may seek truth were we please, but we shall not find it in the Scriptures.

If a person is honestly inquiring after truth, he will have recourse to no shifts—no far-fetched and over-strained methods of establishing a particular point. There will be no prejudices admitted in favour of one opinion, and against another; there will be no reluctance to receive evidence, on whatever side it present itself; there will be a cautious and diligent use of all the means, by which a correct view of the subject is most likely to be obtained. Truth alone being his object, there will be no temptation to step out of the way which leads to it. When the question regards the sense of a particular author, he will proceed according to the plan pursued on all such occasions, and understand the terms in their common acceptation, unless it clearly appear that the author has designedly deviated from the established usage. He will not attempt to make him express sentiments different from those which he seems to express, if he is writing historically or didactically, without assigning a reason sufficient to satisfy any competent judge. If we see a person taking a different method, wresting words from their obvious import, talking of metaphors when the literal sense is perfectly intelligible and spontaneously presents itself to the mind, trying to find out, not what they naturally signify, but what they may be made to signify by the dexterity of bold and unprincipled criticism, and converting the text into an enigma, the recondite meaning of which can be discovered only by conjecture and not by any rational rules of interpretation, we have ground to suspect that he is not honest, and that his aim is, not to come at the truth, but to establish a doctrine of his own. Such is the procedure of Socinians, with respect to the atonement and the divinity of Christ. It is itself sufficient to put every man upon his guard, and betrays a conviction, on their part, that the Scriptures, as we have them, and their system, cannot stand together. Socinianism requires a new Bible, or, what amounts to the same thing, an improved version; that is, a corrupted text, and an equally corrupt interpretation.

LECTURE LVIII.

ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

The Correspondence between the atoning Sacrifices of the Levitical Law and the Death of Christ, traced and proved—Christ a Substitute, and his Death an Atonement—Notice of Objections to the Doctrine.

We have ground for believing that the death of Christ was an atonement for sin, in the language of Scripture, which, being borrowed from the sacrificial rites of the law, is applied to that event in such a manner, as to leave no doubt that his death was considered by the sacred writers as having the same nature, and the same design, with the ancient oblations. But, in order more fully to establish the doctrine, let us take a closer view of the legal sacrifices, and observe how exact is the correspondence between them and the death of Christ in every thing essential. If we find that it has all the characters of a true and proper sacrifice for sin, we cannot hesitate to view it in this light, and to regard it as the procuring cause of pardon and eternal life.

The first point of resemblance is found in the substitution of the sacrifice. It was put in the place of the person who offered it, and was called an offering for his sin, or for his soul. It was not a free gift, a token of gratitude, or a tribute paid by a subject to his sovereign, but a vicarious oblation, which was slain to signify the death which he deserved, and to save him from personally undergoing the penalty. As this notion of a sacrifice is obviously taught by the law, so it was adopted by the Jews and by the Gentiles, who both considered the victim as given for them, as occupying their place. This was signified by the act of laying his hands upon the head of the victim, by which the offerer transferred his guilt from himself to the devoted animal, that it might be punished in his stead. Jesus Christ was substituted in the room of sinners; and hence he is called εγγυος, "the *surety* of a better covenant."* A surety is one who gives security for another, that the other will fulfil his engagements, or, in the case of failure, that he will fulfil them for him. Some say that he was surety to us for God, having engaged that God would perform his promises; or surety for us to God, having engaged to him that we should perform the condition of the covenant. Both ideas are inadmissible, and the true meaning is explained by the apostle in another place, when he says, that Christ was "the Mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."† He was a surety who undertook to die for those whom he represented.

The substitution is evident from those passages in which he is said to have died *for us*, υπερ ημων. It is acknowledged that the preposition υπερ sometimes signifies merely *on account of*, or *with a view to the advantage of*; but it does not follow that, in reference to the death of Christ, it imports only that he died for our good, to confirm his doctrine, and to set us an example. It is beyond doubt that it also signifies in *the room of*, and bears this sense when it occurs in connexion with the verb αποθνησκω,‡ both in the Scriptures and in the classics. "The Socinians," says Raphelius, "will not find one Greek writer to support a different interpretation."‖ In this sense it occurs repeatedly in the writings of Xenophon: Η και εθελοις αν υπερ τουτου αποθανειν;§ "would you be willing to die for this boy?" that is, as is evident from the context, "Will you die in his stead? save his life by parting with your own?" Αντιοχος του πατερος υπεραποθανων—¶ "Antiochus *dying for* his father" obtained such glory, that he alone among the Greeks was called Φιλοπατωρ.** The preposition retains the same sense in the New Testament. When Caiaphas, the high priest, said, that it was expedient ινα εις ανθρωπος αποθανη υπερ του λαου, και μη ολον το εθνος απολητα,†† he manifestly signified that our Lord should be put to death as a victim for the Jews, that by his death they might be saved from the vengeance of the Romans. He was to be like the περιψημματα and περικαθαρματα of the Greeks, men who were taken from the multitude and slain, that the anger of the gods might be appeased. "Scarcely—υπερ δικαιου, *for a righteous man* will one die, but *for a good man*,—υπερ του αγαθου—some would even dare to die."‡‡ Persons might be found to lay down their lives for such a man. The apostle is unquestionably speaking of a case of substitution, of the voluntary sacrifice of one life for another. The proposition, therefore, must, by all the laws of criticism, have the same import, in the words which immediately follow:—"But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ *died for us*,—υπερ ημων απεθανε."‖‖

The same inference may be drawn from the use of

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* Heb. vii. 22. † Ib. ix. 15. ‡ To die.
‖ Raphelii Annot. tom. ii. p. 253, 254. § De Cyri Exped.
¶ De Venat. ** Lover of his father.
†† That one man should *die for* the people, and that the whole nation perish not. ‡‡ Rom. v. 7. ‖‖ Ib. 8.

the preposition αντι, which conveys the idea of commutation and substitution. The law says, οφθαλμος αντι οφθαλμου, οδος αντι οδοντος;* requiring that the man who had put out the eye or the tooth of another, should lose one of his own. To render κακον αντι κακου,† is to do any injury to our neighbour, because he has done an injury to us. In these cases, the general idea is that of commutation. The preposition also denotes substitution and succession, or coming in the room of another. Thus, Archelaus reigned over Judea,—αντι Ἡρωδου του πατρος αυτου—"in the room of Herod his father."‡ And in what other sense but this of substitution can we understand it in the following words? "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom *for* many—" δουναι την ψυχην αὐτου λυτρον αντι πολλων.‖ The preposition ascertains the action to be vicarious, to be an action performed by one person, not only for the benefit, but in the room of another, as a benevolent man would lay down the price demanded for the liberty of a captive, which the captive himself was unable to pay. The life of sinners was forfeited, and it was redeemed by the life of the Saviour. The word λυτρον signifies a price of any kind, but is limited to the sense of a ransom by the occasion, being λυτρον αντι πολλων,§ for the deliverance of many. There is a compound noun, αντιλυτρων, which is used by Paul, when he says, that Christ gave himself a "*ransom* for all, to be testified in due time;"¶ intimating, in the most intelligible manner, that his death was not merely the means, but the price of our redemption, and, consequently, that his sufferings were vicarious.

When we affirm the substitution of Christ, we suppose that our guilt was legally transferred to him, so that he was made answerable for it; and, in this respect, there is a resemblance between him and the ancient sacrifices. They were called sin-offerings, and simply חטאה, *sin*,—the same term being employed to denote the transgression and the oblation for it; because there was a translation of the one to the other, or the latter was considered as bearing the former. This translation was represented by a significant rite. When the priest, the ruler, or any one of the common people, brought for a sin-offering a bullock, a goat, or a kid, or a lamb, each was commanded to lay his hand upon its head; and the meaning of the rite is evident from what was done on the great day of atonement. Two goats were then presented, of which the one was to be slain and offered for a sin-offering; but the other was to be sent by the hand of a fit person into the wilderness, in order to represent the removal of guilt as the effect of the sacrifice. That the design might be understood, and might make a proper impression upon the spectators, "Aaron," says the law, "shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness."** There seems to be an allusion to this rite, and certainly the same thing is expressed by the prophet, when he says, "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."†† They were laid upon him as the sins of the Israelites were laid upon the scape-goat. To the same purpose are the words of the Apostle, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* I add the testimony of Peter: "Who his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree: by whose stripes ye were healed."† The sins which he bore on the cross were not his own, but ours; and "his bearing them" implies, that they had been laid upon him as a burden under which we were sinking into perdition, and from which he was graciously pleased to relieve us. It is an obvious inference from these passages, that there was a transference of the sins of men to our Saviour, as the sins of the Israelite were transferred to the animal which he brought to the altar. Christ having voluntarily engaged to give satisfaction to the Divine justice for us, they were reckoned to him, as a debt is reckoned to a surety when the debtor himself is insolvent, and the creditor looks to the surety for payment. God dealt with him as if the sins had been his own; he inflicted punishment upon him as if he had been the offender. This is what we mean by saying that our sins were imputed to him; he came under an obligation to bear the penalty. They were only imputed to him, but not accounted really his own. This was impossible; for God, who always judges according to truth, would not charge one person with having committed the sins of another. Such a charge would be false, and never was, nor never will be, made. We cannot, therefore, read without disgust and detestation the language in which some high-flyers have indulged,—men who carried every thing to excess, and exposed important doctrines to reproach, by the unguarded and presumptuous manner in which they expressed them; not hesitating to call our blessed Lord a sinner, and the greatest of sinners; and to maintain that, during his last sufferings, he was separated from God and disowned by him, and was odious and abominable in his sight. These are not the words of truth and soberness, but the ravings of impiety or insanity. Such men did not understand the translation of guilt, which merely implies an obligation to punishment, but no moral taint, and was so far from rendering our Lord an object of the displeasure of his Father, that he never was the object of higher approbation than when he was expiring on the cross. The voluntary susception of our guilt, while in himself he was perfectly pure, could not for one moment change the sentiment of entire complacency with which his heavenly Father had always regarded him. Without sin, he was a sin-offering, bearing the iniquities of those whom he had undertaken to redeem. He owed nothing to justice for himself, but he owed much as the surety of men. His death was accompanied with such circumstances as showed that it was a penal act; for, besides its shame and its torments, it was that kind of death which the law had pronounced to be accursed; and the preternatural darkness at his crucifixion, was a visible symbol of the frown of the invisible Creator.

The animal which was substituted in the room of the offending Israelite, and over which he had confessed his sin, was slain, and laid upon the altar. Life was given for life; the life of the animal, which God was pleased to accept, instead of the life of the man. "The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it unto you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."‡ That Jesus Christ died, is a fact about which there is no dispute; but, with respect to the design of his death, we have seen that his professed followers are far from being agreed. It is granted that he died for our good, that he submitted to crucifixion to attest his doctrine, and give us an example; but that his death was a sacrifice of atonement, some men confidently deny. Upon their hypothesis, there was no material difference between his

* An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. † Evil for evil.
‡ Matt. ii. 22. ‖ Ib. xx. 28. § A ransom for many.
¶ 1 Tim. ii. 6. ** Lev. xvi. 21, 22. †† Is. liii. 6.

* 2 Cor. v. 21. † 1 Peter, ii. 24. ‡ Lev. xvii. 11.

death and that of many other holy men, who laid down their lives for the truth, and at the same time, were admirable patterns of faith, and patience, and hope. We assert, that he died as the substitute of the guilty; that death was a punishment inflicted upon him for our sins, which were the impulsive cause of his sufferings, and, in this sense, he was made a curse for us; and that the great design was, to give satisfaction to Divine justice. This view is founded upon the passages formerly quoted to prove his substitution, passages which assert, that "he gave himself for us;" that "he was made sin," or a sin-offering, "for us;" that "he died for all;" that "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" that "he suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." In a case where the defence of a particular system was not concerned, it would be acknowledged to be contrary to the laws of sound interpretation to understand, by such expressions, merely that the death of Christ has been productive of some benefit to mankind. I should wish to know, from those who wrest them from their obvious sense—the sense which they have suggested to all men but themselves—in what stronger terms the inspired writers could have expressed themselves, if it had been really their design to inform us that Christ died, not only for our good, but to atone for our sins; and whether the usage of the language, and the prevailing sentiments of those for whose instruction they wrote, would have led them to employ other terms than those which they have actually employed. If their words do not teach that the death of Christ was a true and proper sacrifice for sin, we must say that this is an idea which human language is incapable of communicating. Is it possible to be more explicit than Peter is, when he affirms, that Christ suffered for sin, or as a sin-offering, the just for the unjust? Surely every man must see, who has not wilfully shut his eyes, that the just One suffered in the room of the unjust; suffered that they might not suffer; that his death was vicarious, and he submitted to it that he might bring us to God, or effect a reconciliation between us and our offended Creator. There is no perceptible difference between his death and the legal sacrifices but this—that, in the one case, it was an animal without reason which was slain, and in the other, it was a man, the Son of the living God, who was the victim. His death was called a sacrifice, without the slightest hint of a metaphor. "He offered himself," as the Levitical priest offered the goats, and lambs, and bullocks, which were required by the law, "he offered himself without spot to God;" he appeared in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;"* to accomplish at once what was typified by the legal oblations. He was a "Lamb slain;" the "Lamb of God, which took away the sins of the world."†

Attempts have been made to neutralize the evidence furnished by these passages in favour of the doctrine of atonement. When Christ is said to have borne our sins, we are told that this does not mean that he bore the punishment of them, but that he bore them away; and that he bore them away by procuring the offer of pardon upon repentance, or by presenting motives fit to turn us from our sins, in consequence of which we are forgiven. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, it is said, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."‡ In order to prove, from this verse, the propitiatory nature of the sufferings of Christ, the two words which express what he has done in reference to our sins,—נשׂא and סבל, translated *borne* and *carried*,—have been carefully examined, and their import has been ascertained by a comparison of other passages in which they occur. The result is given by Dr. Magee in the forty-second note.* Both signify, not to bear *away*, but to *bear* or *sustain*, as a person bears a burden, and this is evidently the sense in all cases where sin is spoken of; "the suffering, or being liable to suffer, some infliction on account of sin, which, in the case of the offender himself, would be properly called punishment." "We are told that God *made the iniquities of us all to fall upon him*, who is said to have *borne the iniquities of many*: thus is the *bearing of our iniquities* explained to be the *bearing them laid on as a burden*; and though a reference is undoubtedly intended to the laying the iniquities of the Jewish people on the head of the scape-goat, which was done, (as is urged by Socinus, Crellius, Taylor, and other writers who adopt their notions,) that they might be borne, or carried *away*; yet this does not prevent them from being borne *as a burden*. The great object in *bearing our sins*, was certainly to bear them *away*; but the manner in which they were borne, so as to be ultimately borne away by him who died for us, was by his enduring the afflictions and sufferings which were due to them; by his being "numbered with transgressors," treated as if he had been an actual transgressor, and made *answerable for us*, and consequently *wounded for our transgressions* and *smitten for our iniquities*, in such a manner that our *peace was effected* by his chastisement, and we *healed by his bruises*; he *having borne our iniquities*, having suffered that which was the penalty due to them on our part, and *having offered* himself *a sacrifice for sin* on our account."† Peter alludes to this passage in Isaiah, when he says, "that Christ—τας αμαρτιας ημων αυτος ανηνεγκεν επι το σωματι αυτου επι το ξυλον, —bore our sins in his own body on the tree."‡ It has been contended, that the verb αναφερω here signifies *to bear away*; but literally it means *to carry up from a lower to a higher place*, and is used to express the act of sacrificing: "Who needeth not daily, like the high priest—αναφερειν θυσιας,—*to offer sacrifices* for sins."‖ It does not seem to occur in the sense of *bearing away*. In the passage under consideration, if it convey any idea beyond simple bearing, it signifies *to carry up*, and intimates that Christ carried up our sins to the cross, having previously taken them upon him, that he might there bear the punishment of them, as the legal sacrifices were carried up to the altar, and laid upon it, that they might be consumed.

It has been objected to the vicarious nature of the death of Christ, which imports that he endured the punishment due to our sins, that he did not actually suffer the punishment to which we were liable, for his sufferings were temporary, whereas eternal death is the doom of transgressors. The objection comes with an ill grace from Socinians, who deny the eternity of future punishment, unless they mean to refute us from our own principles, or to use the *argumentum ad hominem*; but from whatever quarter it comes, it involves a difficulty which may occur to the attentive inquirer. It has been frequently said, that eternity is not a necessary adjunct of the punishment of sin, but arises from the limited capacity of creatures, who could not endure in a definite time, the full execution of the penalty. I am disposed to call in question the accuracy of this statement, and to believe that it is not from the weakness of the subject that suffering will be perpetual, but because the penalty implies the final forfeiture of happiness; and that, by the constitution of things, the loss incurred is a total and irretrievable loss. Sin separates the creature from the Creator, without the possibility of reunion. Be this as it may, I remark, that, in considering the atonement of Christ, we are not to inquire what was the *quantum* of suffering, in order to ascertain whether it bore an exact pro-

* Heb. ix. 14, 26. † Rev. v. 6, &c. John i. 29. ‡ Is. liii. 4.

* Magee on Aton. vol. i. † Magee, vol. i. p. 461.
† 1 Pet. ii. 24. ‖ Heb. vii. 27.

portion to the sufferings which would have fallen to the lot of those whom he died to redeem. Some men have allowed themselves to go into estimates of this kind, and have presumptuously, and, in my opinion, nonsensically maintained, that the sum of suffering was so nicely adjusted between our Saviour and the objects of his love, that, if there had been a single person more to be saved, his sufferings would have been proportionably augmented. They seem to have imagined, that he actually endured all the pain which the millions of the redeemed were doomed to endure throughout the whole of their being.—We should scarcely have expected arithmetical calculations to be introduced into a subject so little connected with them; but human speculations are sometimes pushed to an extravagant and ridiculous length. This comes from understanding our sins to be debts in a literal sense, and the sufferings of Christ to be such a payment as a surety makes in pounds, shillings, pence, and farthings. I remark by the way, that they have gone to the opposite extreme, who have ventured to affirm, that one drop of the blood of Christ would have been sufficient to redeem the world. They might be asked to tell us, why he shed so many drops, and even poured out his soul unto death, and whether they seriously believe that he suffered more than was necessary for the salvation of mankind? To return to the first calculators, they entirely overlook the personal dignity of our Saviour, which must have given an unspeakable value to his sufferings; for had this been taken into the account, they would have seen, that such an accumulation of pain as they imagine was unnecessary. According to their hypothesis, the dignity of his person added nothing to the value of his sufferings, nor did they need to be enhanced by it, as they were equal in degree to the appointed sufferings of his people. We can hardly speak, without presumption, upon a subject so mysterious and awful. His sufferings were great, beyond the power of language to express, or of imagination to conceive; but if we admit that all the acts of his human nature were finite, we cannot consistently say that his sufferings were infinite in degree, and must consequently admit that their transcendent worth was owing to the union of that nature to the divine. He did not, therefore, suffer all the pains and sorrows of sinners, but he suffered what was equivalent. It was the blood of the Son of God which was shed; it was the Lord of glory who was crucified. Hence, although his sufferings were temporary, they satisfied the demands of justice, and were a valid ground upon which God might pardon the sins of believers. It was not necessary that the sacrifice should remain for ever upon the altar, because it was so superior in worth to all former sacrifices, so precious in itself, that, in the language of Scripture, God "smelled a savour of rest."

Perhaps our ideas are not always distinct, when we speak of the death of Christ as a satisfaction for sin. That word, indeed, is used to signify any thing with which the person having a claim is contented, whether he receive the whole that he claims, or only a part of it, or something instead of it. In law, it strictly signifies a payment which may or may not be admitted, according to the pleasure of him to whom it is due; and it takes place when not the very thing is done which he had a right to demand, but something which he is pleased to accept as an equivalent. In the present case, what the law demanded was the death of the transgressors themselves; it was, therefore, a relaxation of the law, to admit another to die for them; and, on this account, the death of Christ was properly a satisfaction to justice; something with which it was content, although not the very thing which it originally required. It is on this ground that sinners were not *ipso facto* set free from guilt and condemnation, but continue under them till they believe. The reason is, that they did not themselves undergo the penalty, but another underwent it in their room; and the Lawgiver had a right to settle the terms of their actual deliverance. We need not, therefore, puzzle ourselves with inquiring how much Christ suffered; for, besides that this is a question which we are not competent to decide, it is enough to know, that he suffered all that was necessary to demonstrate the Divine abhorrence of sin, to maintain the authority of the law, and to exclude the impenitent from the hope of impunity.

The same effect is ascribed to the death of Christ, as to the ancient sacrifices, and both are said to have averted the anger of God, and procured his good will and favour to man. Upon offering the appointed sacrifice, an Israelite was exempted from the penalty incurred by transgression, and was permitted to retain his place in the congregation, and to enjoy his political and ecclesiastical privileges. This expression is frequently subjoined to the precept respecting offerings to be made on particular occasions: "The priest shall make atonement for his sin, and it shall be forgiven him."* This is the prayer to be presented on the occasion of offering a heifer when a person had been slain, and the murderer could not be discovered;—"Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them."† If, then, the death of Christ has accomplished the design of sacrifices, we may justly conclude, that it was a sacrifice in the true and proper sense. The blessings which we enjoy by it are, pardon, peace, and the favour of God. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."‡ "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."‖ "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."§ There were some sins for which the law provided no sacrifice, and the transgressor died without mercy: the superior excellence of this sacrifice appears from its unbounded efficacy, there being no sin, however aggravated, which will be not remitted to him who believes. In a word, Christ is said to have made peace by the blood of his cross, to have redeemed us to God with his blood, to have redeemed us from the curse, to have delivered us from the wrath to come, to have made us kings and priests unto God, even our Father. It is plain, from these and many other passages which it is unnecessary to quote, that the removal of guilt, the repeal of the condemnatory sentence, and the hope of eternal life, are attributed to his death as the procuring cause.

The design of sacrifices was to appease the anger of the Deity; Jews and Gentiles agreed in this idea. Jesus Christ is called a "merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people,"¶—εις το ιλασκεσθαι τας αμαρτιας του λαου,—literally, *to propitiate the sins of the people;* but the expression is evidently elliptical, and is put for εις το ιλασκεσθαι θεον περι των αμαρτιων, *to propitiate God for the sins* of the people. The design of his death was to make God propitious to men, to avert his anger, and to procure his favour. This is what we mean by making atonement for sin. Such an atonement as consists in the destruction of sin by repentance, and the acquisition

* Lev. iv. 26, 31, 35. vi. 7. xii. 8, &c. † Deut. xxi. 8.
‡ Rom. iv. 25. v. 1, 2. ‖ Ephes. i. 7. § Acts xiii. 38, 39.
¶ Heb. ii. 17.

of habits of holiness, (and this is the only atonement which Socinus would admit), could not be expressed by ἱλασκομαι,* or its derivative ἱλασμος. It is well known that ἱλασμος signifies an atonement, something done or suffered to reconcile an offended person; and it is repeatedly applied to our Saviour, obviously for the purpose of informing us what was the design and the effect of his death. "He is—ἱλασμος—the *propitiation* for our sins."† "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be—ἱλασμον—a *propitiation* for our sins."‡ Paul makes use of a different word, but of the same derivation,—"Whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation*—ἱλαστηριον.‖ It is the word employed by the Seventy, to express the covering of the ark of the covenant, which was called the mercy-seat; and they have joined with it the word επιθεμα. Ἱλαστηριον επιθεμα, is *the propitiatory covering*.§ Hence, some read the passage, "Whom God hath set forth a mercy-seat." 'Christ,' say the Unitarians, 'is what the mercy-seat was under the former dispensation. In him God shows himself merciful. Here he takes his stand, and declares his gracious purposes.' Their meaning is, that Christ is the messenger of Divine mercy, the medium of Divine communication; and thus they get rid of the idea of atonement. Grotius supposes ἱλαστηριον to be a noun, and says, that all words of this termination import an efficient power, and are improperly understood as merely declarative, and, consequently, that ἱλαστηριον here signifies, that Christ has made God propitious. Others, regarding it as an adjective, think that a noun is understood, either ἱερειον or θυμα,¶ and that the meaning is, God hath set him forth as a propitiatory sacrifice; ἱλαστηριος the adjective signifying *having the force* or *power to propitiate* or *expiate*. And, that this is the true sense of the word, is plain from two considerations: First, the Apostle calls him ἱλαστηριον, "a *propitiation* through faith in his blood," intimating that it was the effusion of his blood which propitiated, as under the law it was the blood of the devoted animal which made an atonement. Secondly, Something more than a declaration of mercy must be intended, because the design of setting him forth as a propitiation was, "to declare the justice of God in the remission of sin, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."** We can understand how Divine justice was displayed, if Christ died for sin, or suffered the punishment of it; but there is nothing like justice in a simple declaration of mercy.

The atoning nature of the death of Christ is signified, when its effect is said to be "our reconciliation to God," and is expressed by the verbs καταλασσειν and αποκαταλασσειν, and by the noun καταλλαγη.†† When we were enemies—κατηλλαγημεν,—*we were reconciled* to God by the death of his Son."‡‡ "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received—την καταλλαγην—*the reconciliation*."‖‖ It is objected, that it is no where said that God was reconciled to us, but that we are reconciled to him; and such a reconciliation does not signify the averting of his anger against us, but the laying aside our enmity against him. We may ask those who advance the objection, whether they believe that God was not offended at the sins of men? If they say that he was not, they give the lie to innumerable passages, in which his abhorrence of sin, and his determination to punish the sinner, are declared; and they virtually maintain, that holiness and justice are not perfections of his nature. If they admit that sin is displeasing to him, and vengeance is proclaimed against the sinner, they must also admit, that not only we are reconciled to God, but he is reconciled to us; that having been once angry, he is now pacified. Whether they will allow that this change was effected by the death of Christ or not, they can neither deny that it does take place, and is owing to some cause, nor object to the idea itself with appearance of reason. He who once threatened to punish another, but has since pardoned him, and now treats him with kindness, has certainly been reconciled to him. If his sentiments towards him were always the same, his appearances of displeasure were a dramatic show, inconsistent with sincerity. The argument that God is not said, in express terms, to have been reconciled to us, is of no weight, while his reconciliation is implied in other phrases; as that he hath made peace by the blood of his cross, and reconciled those who were once alienated, and enemies in their mind by wicked works, and that Christ is a propitiation for sin, or has made God propitious to us, with whom, on account of sin, he was formerly displeased. The objectors have been misled by not attending to the true import of καταλλασσεσθαι, and διαλλαττεσθαι, which is also used in the New Testament. Such words are employed in the classics to signify, the removing of the anger of the gods, and bear the same sense in the sacred writings.—They signify, to return to a state of peace with a person whom we had offended, to pacify him and render him friendly. Thus, when our Lord says in the Gospel of Matthew, if "thy brother hath aught against thee," has some ground of offence, "go and—διαλλαγθι τω αδελφω σου—be reconciled to thy brother,"* nothing can be plainer, than that the offender is not exhorted to lay aside his enmity to his brother, although this is understood; and that the purpose of going to the offended person is, to reconcile him by confession and reparation, to appease his anger, and persuade him to be at peace with the offender. Here then the phrase, be reconciled to another, signifies to reconcile the other to us; and why should not the word have the same meaning, when it is used in reference to God? We are reconciled to him, as we are reconciled to our injured brother; something is done which disposes him to receive us into favour. Now, the cause of the reconciliation which the Scripture assigns is, the death of Christ, and, consequently, his death was a propitiatory sacrifice. The Apostle explains our being saved from wrath, by "our receiving the reconciliation."† To receive the reconciliation is to obtain the remission of our sins; but to receive our conversion, which is the sense of Socinians, is a form of speech altogether unprecedented. The two reconciliations of God to sinners and of sinners to God, are mentioned in the fifth chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians. Of the first the apostle says, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."‡ Thus, reconciliation consisted in forgiving them, that is, in ceasing to be angry with them, and receiving them into favour; and how it was effected we learn in general from the mention of Christ as a person by whom the world was reconciled, and in particular from the words subjoined for explanation. "For he made him to be sin," or "a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."‖ This reconciliation was evidently on the part of God, who, by the mediation of Christ, opened the way for the exercise of his mercy in pardoning the guilty. It cannot mean our personal reconciliation to God, or our conversion, for this follows as a consequence of the former. On the ground of God's reconciliation to us, we are exhorted to be reconciled to him, and the great motive or encouragement is his previous reconciliation. "He hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be

* To propitiate. † 1 John ii. 2. ‡ Ib. iv. 10. ‖ Rom. iii. 25.
§ Exod. xxv. 17. ¶ A sacrificial victim, or sacrifice.
** Rom. iii. 26. †† To reconcile. Reconciliation.
‡‡ Rom. v. 10. |||| Ib. v. 11.

* Matt. v. 24. † Rom. v. 9. 11. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 19.
‖ 2 Cor. v. 21.

ye reconciled unto God."* 'Since God has given Christ to be a propitiation for sin, and has sent us to proclaim the joyful tidings, do you accept the offer of peace, and enter into covenant with him.' We are reconciled to God when we are justified by faith.

It is false to affirm, that God is never said to be reconciled to us; and, consequently, this argument against the propitiatory nature of the death of Christ falls to the ground. It is equally false to affirm, that God was reconciled before he sent his Son into the world, and that therefore Christ did not die to reconcile him. We acknowledge that it was because he loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. But this love was merely a benevolent purpose to deliver us by proper means, and proceeded no farther than to provide those means. He had not actually forgiven us, but was willing to forgive us, if a sufficient atonement was made. He appointed Christ to die for transgressors, that he might receive them into favour in perfect consistency with his threatenings against sin, and the righteousness of his administration. He was content—nay he willed—that the grounds of his displeasure against us should be removed; but, till they were removed, he was not actually reconciled; and hence our pardon and restoration are not represented as the immediate effects of his original purpose to save us, but are ascribed to the vicarious sufferings of the Saviour. "The chastisement of our peace," or by which our peace was procured, "was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." God was reconciled when that was done, which made justice cease to demand our punishment.

The general ground on which we maintain the doctrine of atonement is, the necessity arising from the nature and the revealed will of God, that the transgressors of the law should be subjected to the penalty. We think that the transgressors can be allowed to escape only by a gracious dispensation, admitting a surety to suffer in their room. We cannot see how the honour of the Divine character and government could be otherwise maintained. Believing that avenging justice is essential to God, we conclude that free pardon, or pardon upon the simple condition of repentance, was impossible. But, although abstract reasoning from the Divine perfections may be auxiliary to our belief of any particular doctrine, the proper foundation of faith is the express testimony of Scripture; and I have therefore endeavoured to lay before you a part of the evidence which it supplies on this most important subject. The argument drawn from the justice of God in support of this doctrine, was considered when I endeavoured to illustrate his perfections.

It is an important question, for whom Christ offered his sacrifice; and the answers to it are different. Some contend that he died for all men; and others, that he died for those alone who were given to him by his Father. Of late, we have heard much of a new doctrine, which maintains not only that Christ died for all men, but that, in consequence of his death, all men are actually pardoned. The true Gospel is not, that God for Christ's sake will forgive the sins of all who believe: but that he has already forgiven every man, woman, and child, who is now alive, or shall be in the ages to come. It seems a natural inference, that every man will be saved; but to guard against this mistake, we are informed that, although all men are already pardoned, this act of grace will be of no avail to them, unless they believe that they are pardoned. This faith is of easy attainment, as easy as to believe that the sun is shining at noon; because, if it is true that all men are pardoned, it requires no effort to conclude that, since I am a man, I am one of the number. It is added, indeed, that we shall not enjoy the benefit of this pardon, unless we not only believe, but are sanctified by our faith; but this is going still farther from the genuine Gospel, by making our final deliverance from condemnation depend upon our holiness, and not exclusively upon the atonement of Christ. What a mass of error, contradiction, and absurdity! Here we have a pardon which is not pardon, because it affords no security to the possessor; the guilt of sin taken away, and yet liable to be charged upon the sinner; an act of indemnity passed in his favour, while everlasting punishment is still hanging over his head! Who can receive this doctrine who has learned from the Scriptures that we are "justified by faith," that is, that pardon follows faith, and does not go before it? Who can believe that all men are pardoned, who has read in innumerable passages that "all men are by nature children of wrath;" that "God is angry with them every day;" that "his wrath is revealed from heaven against them;" that it is "coming upon them;" that "the whole world is guilty before him?"* Would the sacred writers have spoken thus if they had known that all men are already forgiven?

Others, who affirm that Christ died for all men, explain their views in a different manner. He may be said to have died for all, because, in consequence of his death, a dispensation of grace is established, under which all men are placed; a new covenant is made with them, which promises eternal life to sincere, instead of perfect obedience; and such assistance is afforded to them as, if rightly improved, will enable them to work out their salvation. To every person who understands the Scriptures, it will be evident that this scheme is false in all its parts, and consequently, that the doctrine which it is brought forward to support, is destitute of any solid foundation. If this is the sense in which Christ died for all, he did not die for all, because the scheme is a gross and manifest perversion of the Gospel. The fundamental error of the advocates of universal redemption lies in an inaccurate idea of the nature of an atonement. We have shown that it consisted in vicarious suffering, the suffering of one in the room of another. The one bare the sins of the other; the one suffered that the other might not suffer. From the application of the terms of the ancient law to the death of Christ, it appears that his death was a sacrifice of the same kind with those which had been offered by Divine appointment from the beginning; that he was the substitute of sinners; that their guilt was imputed to him; that he bore the punishment to which they were exposed; and bore it with this design, that they might not be punished. In consequence of having offered a sacrifice, the Israelite, who had transgressed, was acquitted, the penalty was not executed upon him. Must not this be the effect of the sacrifice of Christ? Must not those for whom it was offered be freed from condemnation? Does not justice require that they should be dismissed with impunity, since it has already received full satisfaction? The surety has paid the debt, and shall the debtor himself be called upon to pay? No; the claim of the creditor has ceased; the debtor is under no obligation to him, and is as free as if he had never owed a single farthing. If, then, Christ died for all men, it necessarily follows that all men will be saved. The inference is obvious, and cannot be evaded. If an atoning sacrifice was offered for all men, all men must be forgiven. Will God punish sin twice, first in the person of the Surety, and then in the persons themselves, in whose place he stood? It will be acknowledged, without a dissenting voice, that in any other case this would be a manifest injustice. But, "is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid: the Judge of all the earth will do right." Either then all men will be finally saved, or Christ did not die for all.

* 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

* Eph. ii. 3. Ps. vii. 11. Rom. i. 18. Eph. v. 6. Rom. iii. 19.

But few will be so bold as to maintain, no person who has any reverence for Scripture will maintain, universal salvation; and to be consistent, he ought also to renounce the doctrine of universal redemption.

Our Lord, speaking of those for whom he died, calls them his sheep. "I lay down my life for the sheep."* He explains who his sheep are by saying, that they are such persons as "hear his voice and follow him;" and he adds, "that he gives to them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand."† Does it not plainly follow from his words, that those for whom he died shall be saved, that he died for none but those upon whom the gift of faith should be bestowed? And does he not signify, by particularizing them as the persons for whom he laid down his life, that he did not die for others of an opposite character? If he died for all, there would be no meaning in saying that he died for his sheep, because in this case there would be nothing peculiar to them, nothing by which they were distinguished from any other description of men. Again he says in his solemn prayer to his Father, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine."‡ He prayed for the disciples, and not for them alone, but for those in all ages and places who should believe on him through their word; but he did not pray for the world. Intercession is a part of the priestly office of Christ, as well as sacrificing; and it may be assumed as certain, that the same persons are the objects of both. On what ground could we suppose, that his sacrifice embraced a wider range than his intercession, that he willingly shed his blood for the redemption of some, but afterwards declined to pray to his Father for them. It was not so with the Jewish priests, who were types of him, for they bore the names of all the tribes on their breastplate, when they went into the holy of holies, and represented all without exception, for whom the annual atonement was made. So also does Christ. He intercedes for those whose sins he bore in his own body on the tree, and therefore, as he does not intercede for all men, he did not die for all. This argument may be considered as conclusive, till some better reason is given, why Christ prayed for his disciples, but would not pray for the world.

It is acknowledged there are some passages which seem to favour the doctrine of universal redemption; but if there are others which represent the design of his death as limited,—and it has appeared from the nature of the case, that his sacrifice was not offered for all, since all are not forgiven,—we must endeavour to give a consistent sense to the former passages, and show that Scripture is in harmony with itself. It is said that Christ "taketh away the sin of the world,"‖ and is "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world."§ But in these, and some other places, the *world* does not signify every individual of mankind, but the nations in general, as distinguished from the Jews, who were long the peculiar people. It is said again, that Christ "died for all;" but the meaning is explained by the words which follow, "that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again;"¶ and they signify that by *all* we ought to understand, not all men without exception, but all those who are made spiritually alive by his death, and consecrated to the service of their gracious Deliverer. It is farther said, that he "gave himself a ransom for all."** But if every individual of the human race is meant, it necessarily follows that, the ransom being paid, all must be redeemed from the bondage of sin and the curse of the law, unless we are prepared to admit that, in respect of many, he died in vain. By *all*, and *all men*, mentioned in another verse,†† it appears, on considering the passage, that the Apostle included persons of every tribe, rank, and condition; Jews and Gentiles, high and low, rich and poor. Once more, it is said, that "by the grace of God he tasted death for every man;"* but although the language is strong, and seems to be conclusive, some of the advocates of universal redemption honestly acknowledge that it does not prove the point; and that there is a reference to the "many sons" mentioned in the following verse, whom the Captain of our salvation was appointed to bring to glory;—he tasted death for every one of them. It would be tedious to go over all the passages in which the universality of the atonement is supposed to be taught. I shall conclude with this observation:—That the sacred writers do not always use universal terms, in the strict and usual sense; that the *world* sometimes signifies a *part of the world*, and *all* is put for *many*; and that it is not by such terms that we are to determine the extent of the atonement, but by a view of the whole case and all its bearings.

I shall close this discussion, by calling your attention to the objections which are advanced against this doctrine.

First, It is objected, that the doctrine of the atonement is repugnant to all our notions of justice; for, what is more manifestly unjust, than that the innocent should suffer for the guilty? But the assumed maxim, that it is contrary to justice that a person should suffer except for his own sins, is too sweeping, and is not agreeable to the common sentiments of mankind. It is acknowledged that, in certain cases, one man may put himself in the place of another, and bear the consequences of such substitution. We have an example in cases of suretiship, when the surety is compelled to do what the principal has failed to perform. There are even instances in the matter of life and death, of one man engaging to save the life of another by the sacrifice of his own. Here, however, suretiship is extended beyond its due limits, because no man has power to give away his own life, and therefore no government has a right to accept it. But the principle of substitution is recognised and acted upon among men, and cannot consistently be condemned, when adopted as a part of the Divine administration. We cannot reasonably find fault with God for doing what is done by ourselves, is sanctioned by our laws, and is acknowledged by all to be fair and equitable. There are several considerations which show that, in the present case, it was perfectly justifiable. Christ possessed the necessary qualification of freedom from the obligation upon all other men to suffer death; if he had had sins of his own, for which to make satisfaction, he could not have been admitted as a substitute. He was master of his own life as Lord of all, could make a free gift of it, had power to lay it down, and power to take it again. No man could take it from him; he gave it freely, and the law says *Volenti nulla fit injuria*;† he is not injured, when that is done to him, to which he has given his deliberate and cordial consent. God, who might have demanded the death of the guilty themselves, being the supreme Lawgiver, was pleased so far to relax the law, as to allow another to die for them. We see that all things concur to make this transaction accordant with justice. Christ might give his life for us; he gave it freely, and his Father accepted it. God certainly knew what was proper to be done, what became his character, what would most effectually uphold the authority and honour of his government; and what man or angel will presume to arraign the dispensation? In truth, the proper question is, whether the Scriptures teach that Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice; and, if they do, objections

* John x. 15. † Ib. 3, 4. ‡ John xvii. 9. ‖ John i. 29. § 1 John ii. 2. ¶ 2 Cor. v. 15. ** 1 Tim. ii. 6. †† Ib. 4.

* Heb. ii. 9.

† No injury is done to him that consents [that the thing should be done.]

to the justice of the proceeding are vain and impious, because it is past all doubt, that whatever God does is right.

In the second place, it is objected, that this doctrine represents God as furious and revengeful, delighting in the miseries of his creatures, and contented only with torments and blood. He would not be appeased, and permit sinners to escape, till his Son offered the dreadful sacrifice of himself. This is an unfair, irreverent, and malignant representation of a holy and awful truth of revealed religion. The Scriptures do indeed ascribe wrath, jealousy, and revenge to God, by *anthropopathy*, or the figurative attribution of human sentiments and feelings, and even of human members, to him; but every person is aware, that the design of such forms of speech would be perverted, and great dishonour would be done to him by supposing that there is any thing in his nature analogous to the commotions and infirmities of ours. Far be it from us to conceive so unworthily of Him who is all-perfect. Such terms are employed solely to assist us in forming an idea of the contrariety of sin to his nature and will, of the strong disapprobation with which he regards it, and of his fixed determination to render the recompense of their deeds to the transgressors of his law. He has no pleasure in the misery of his creatures, abstractly considered, as he has assured us with an oath; he is naturally good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. But having given a righteous law to man, he will maintain his authority, by executing the penalty upon those who violate it: being the Ruler of the world, he will not permit the disobedient and rebellious to escape with impunity. When we affirm, that avenging justice is essential to God, we do not mean to represent him as cruel and unrelenting, but as one who must do what is right, and will abide by his original law, which denounced death upon transgressors. When we affirm, that he would not pardon sin without an atonement, we do not impute to him any want of mercy, but ascribe to him the perfection of justice, which required that compensation should be made for the wrong which he had sustained, and security should be given for the preservation of his rights and prerogatives.

In the third place, It is objected, that the doctrine of the atonement supposes God to be liable to change, to be first angry, and then pacified. But this objection might be made to every system of religion which admits that sin is displeasing to God: for the same change must take place, when a sinner repents. It might be made to prayer, the professed design of which is, to obtain blessings from him, which he would not otherwise have bestowed. The atonement did not make God hate sin less than he did before, or excite feelings of compassion towards us, which did not formerly exist. He loved us before he gave his Son; and sin still is, and ever will be, the object of his utmost aversion. The effect of the atonement was a change of dispensation, which is consistent with immutability of nature. He could now extend mercy to those whom he was always willing to pardon, but could not pardon honourably, till his justice was satisfied. In fact, he demanded an atonement, because he does not change; and, therefore, would not revoke his threatening, nor lay aside his abhorrence of sin. They represent him as mutable, who assert, that he pardons sin without satisfaction to his justice.

In the fourth place, It is objected, that this doctrine supposes a price to have been paid for our redemption, whereas it is represented in the Scriptures as free. This objection does not bear particularly upon the doctrine, as stated and maintained by us, but it is applicable to the Scripture itself, which says, that we are bought with a price, and yet declares, that we are saved by grace. It is true that the blood of Christ was shed as the ransom of our souls; but still, in respect to us, redemption is free, because nothing is given by us in exchange for it, and it is enjoyed by every man who receives it with humility and gratitude. It is farther evident, that our redemption is of grace, although the death of Christ was the indispensable condition of it, because it originated in the free purpose of God, who might have left us in a state of guilt and misery; because, in this scheme, a surety was admitted instead of sinners themselves, whom the law had marked out as the objects of the penalty; because the surety was chosen and appointed by God, on whose part all the advances were made; and because the office of redeeming us was devolved upon a person so high in dignity, and so closely related to God, that his mission will for ever remain a proof of unmerited and ineffable love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*

In the fifth place, It is objected, that to suppose Christ to have died for our sins, is to suppose him to have made an atonement of himself; because, if he is God, he was offended as well as his Father. The objection is founded on our imperfect knowledge of the doctrine of the Trinity; and it is surely absurd to oppose to a truth clearly revealed, arguments drawn from a subject which surpasses our comprehension. Assuming the doctrine of the Trinity, we must pronounce it to be presumptuous to say that a thing was impossible, although Scripture has told us that it was done, solely because we cannot conceive how it was done. If there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead, the union and distinctions of whom we do not understand, shall we venture to say, that one of them could not act economically in the character of Supreme Lawgiver and Judge, and another, in a different nature assumed for the purpose, do what was necessary to display his justice, and prepare the way for the exercise of his mercy? There have been many instances of human legislators, who, in a private character, gave satisfaction to their own laws. That such cases can be considered as strictly analogous to the present, I will not say; it is certain, however, that in Scripture our Redeemer is represented, during his sufferings, not as the Lawgiver, but as the subject of the law,—not as the equal of the Father, but as his servant. The difficulty of conceiving this arrangement, is not a reason why we should call in question the fact, that he was made under the law, and fulfilled it by his obedience and death.

In the sixth place, An objection is founded on the sufferings and death of believers; for how could they be subject to these evils, if he fully expiated their guilt? When a debt is paid by a surety, the debtor is completely and instantly released, because the surety was included, as well as the debtor, in the original obligation. But, in a case of punishment, where the offender alone was the object of the penalty, the admission of a substitute, being an act of grace, may be accompanied with such conditions as the Lawgiver shall choose to prescribe. It was not, therefore, inconsistent with justice, that in the present case it should be stipulated, that sinners should be pardoned, not immediately after they had offended, but at some period during their lives; and that, although from that moment they should be freed from the sentence of eternal death, they should remain under the original law of mortality. It was certainly in the power of the Supreme Legislator to determine, whether the whole penalty, or only a part of it, should be remitted. And the efficacy of the atonement appears from the removal of the principal part of the penalty, in comparison with which, the evil which is inflicted is as nothing, yea, less than nothing. Besides, that evil,

* 1 John iv. 10.

in consequence of the atonement, has virtually the nature of a blessing, being corrective and not properly penal, subservient to the good of the soul, affording scope for the exercise of many virtues, and contributing to prepare the people of God for a happier and more perfect state. Death itself proves to be the gate of life.

With regard to the objection, that the doctrine of vicarious punishment is calculated to remove the restraint of salutary fear, and to encourage men to go on in sin that grace may abound, it is so stale, and so fully refuted by Scripture and experience, that I deem it unworthy of any farther notice.

LECTURE LIX.

ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

The Intercession of Christ—Place of Intercession—Its Objects, the Elect—Mode of Intercession, Prayer—The subject of it—Its Cause or Reason—Christ the only Intercessor—The Popish Doctrine of the Intercession of Saints and Angels, contrary to Scripture and Reason.

We have proved that Jesus Christ is the priest, as well as the prophet of his church, and that there were two important duties incumbent on him in this character, sacrifice and intercession. The first he performed upon earth, when he died upon the cross; for it has appeared that his death was a true and proper sacrifice offered to God, to appease his justice, and to obtain our eternal redemption. It was, in truth, THE SACRIFICE by way of eminence, all others being merely types of it, and having no efficacy in themselves to expiate guilt. We now proceed to speak of his intercession, which signifies in general those acts of his priestly office, the object of which is to obtain the communication of the benefits of his sacrifice to men, for their pardon and final salvation.—The proper place of his intercession is heaven, into which he entered not long after his resurrection, and where he will continue to minister till all the ends of his office are accomplished. But it is not confined to heaven, for we find him interceding in his state of humiliation. In this sense some understand that passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which it is said, that, "in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications to God, with strong crying and tears."* I doubt the propriety of this application of it, because the apostle expressly declares, that he offered his supplication "to Him that was able to save him from death," representing them as supplications for himself, that he might be supported under his severe afflictions, and ultimately delivered from them. The intercession of Christ signifies his prayer for *us*. His prayer on the cross for his enemies has also been referred to his intercession, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."† Here, however, there is equal reason to doubt. If his intercession is prevalent, or if he always obtains what he asks in the character of our High Priest, it would follow, that all the persons who were concerned in his death will be forgiven.—But, although it is certain that many of them did afterwards repent, and acknowledge him to be the Son of God and the Redeemer of Israel, we are not warranted by Scripture to say, that mercy was extended to the whole multitude that demanded his crucifixion, to all the members of the Sanhedrim who pronounced him to be worthy of death, to Pilate who condemned him, to the Roman soldiers who executed the sentence, and to every individual who consented to the nefarious deed. We must, therefore, consider this prayer as expressive of the spirit of charity, which he has enjoined upon his followers, and of which his own conduct has afforded a perfect example. As a man, he forgave his persecutors, and it was his desire that his Father would forgive them. His official prayers are founded on his knowledge of the purpose of God with respect to individuals; his private prayers on the law, which commands every man to desire the good of others, and to promote it by all lawful means in his power. But, while we leave out these cases, there remains enough to show that Christ acted as an intercessor in his state of humiliation. As he was often engaged in prayer, and sometimes spent whole nights in it, there is no doubt that the subject of his supplications was not himself alone, but his disciples and his church in every age of the world. He told Peter that he had prayed for him that his faith might not fail; and on the evening before his crucifixion, he presented a solemn address to his Father for all his followers, which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."* Although he had not yet died as a propitiation for sin, yet he commenced the work of intercession, because he was already invested with the priestly office, and the atonement would be soon made, from which all the efficacy of his prayers is derived. It was allowed him to anticipate the work of heaven, because it was certain that he would not fail to satisfy the demands of justice, and to pay the price of spiritual blessings.

The Scripture represents the intercession of Christ as consisting in his appearance for us in the heavenly sanctuary. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."† When he had risen from the dead, he ascended to the celestial temple, the seat of the glorious presence of God; and he entered in the character which he had sustained upon earth, namely, that of our representative. After his resurrection he showed himself to his disciples, with the wounds in his hands, and feet, and side, which his enemies had inflicted, and, as nothing is said which implies that they afterwards disappeared, it may be supposed that they remained when he returned to heaven. This may seem to be confirmed by one of the visions of John: "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had been slain;"‡ that is, bearing the marks of a violent death. Hence it has been conjectured, that he appears before God with the visible tokens of his sufferings in his body, as the Jewish high priest carried into the holy of holies a part of the blood of the animal sacrifices, in testimony that they had been slain. It is certain, however, that this exhibition is not necessary to remind his Father of his merits, nor is it for this purpose that it can be conceived to be made. Since it will be acknowledged not to be essential to the design of his ministrations in heaven, it may be questioned whether it be consistent with the present state of his body; and although it would be presumptuous to speak decidedly on a subject of which we know so little, it may be said, with some appearance of truth, that it is not suitable to our conceptions of a glorified body, that it should retain any vestige of infirmity, any mark, however honourable from the manner in which it was acquired, which might in any degree impair its beauty. Laying aside, therefore, this notion, which is more fanciful than solid, we understand his "appearance for us in heaven" to signify, that he presents himself before God in the body which was crucified for our sins, and in the character of our High Priest, to plead his atonement as the ground on

* Heb. v. 7. † Luke xxiii. 34.

* John xvii. 20. † Heb. ix. 24. ‡ Rev. v. 6.

which the blessings of salvation should be communicated to men. It signifies, not the simple presentation of his human nature; for although God manifests himself in a peculiar manner in the upper world, we are as really, though not as sensibly, present with him on earth as in heaven; but an official presentation of it, or, in other words, a ministration by which the design of his office is accomplished. Jesus Christ has left this world, but he has not ceased to act as our High Priest. He retains his office, and performs its duties in his state of exaltation.

Before I proceed to point out more distinctly the nature of his intercession, it will be proper to inquire for whom he intercedes. We may say, then, that he intercedes for the elect, whether they are, or are not in a state of grace.—With regard to those who are not converted, he does not pray, that, continuing as they are, they should be saved, or that their state should be immediately changed; but that, at the appointed time, they should be brought to the knowledge of the truth: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."* These words he spake upon earth, and we cannot doubt that he is still as mindful of those who have not yet entered into the fellowship of his Church. Although living in ignorance and sin, they are dear to him as persons for whom he shed his blood. He looks forward to their conversion as the reward of his sufferings; and it is owing to his appearance in their behalf, that the Holy Spirit is sent to "open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of their sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith."† Faith is the gift of God, and is bestowed upon those alone for whom our Saviour prays; "for in him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings."‡ Enough has been said with respect to this class of the objects of his intercession.

The other class comprehends those who are in a state of grace, and of his prayers for them we shall afterwards speak. He does not pray for all men who are at present alive, or shall hereafter come into existence. His intercession is not more extensive than his sacrifice; and he has told us, that, "as the good Shepherd, he has given his life for the sheep."‖ He has pointed out its limits in the following words: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." "Neither pray I for these alone,"—the few disciples who had attached themselves to him during his public ministry,—"but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."§ Under the Mosaic economy, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraven upon twelve precious stones in the breast-plate which the high priest wore when he appeared before God in the most holy place, and in this manner it was signified that he was the representative of the whole nation. The twelve tribes were typical of believers under the gospel, who are the spiritual Israel; and Jesus Christ, their representative, bears them upon his heart in the heavenly sanctuary. He remembers them with the most tender affection, and manages their affairs with wisdom and fidelity. He did not shed his blood at random, as would have been the case if the sole design of his death had been to render God placable to sinners, and to pave the way for the salvation of those who should comply with the terms upon which it was offered. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," for they were given to him by his Father, and he has taken them under his protection. They live in distant ages; they are scattered over the face of the earth; they are placed in different circumstances; and some of them are so obscure, such solitary and disregarded sojourners in the vale of tears, that their nearest neighbours know little of their character, and still less of their wants and sorrows. But he is as fully acquainted with the case of each individual as if he were the sole object of his care; and hence, as he is a merciful, so he is a faithful High Priest, who does not neglect the interest of the poorest and meanest of his followers. He observes them all, who said to Nathanael, "When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee."*

In his intercession, Jesus Christ expresses his desire for the salvation of his people. We have seen that he appears for them in the presence of God; but that something more is implied than the simple presentation of himself in our nature, we may infer from his own information: "I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Comforter." We know that, in reference to men, prayer is the offering up of their desires to God for the blessings which they need; and we have no reason to think that, in the present case, the meaning is materially different.

Prayer is not inconsistent with the dignity of the human nature of our Saviour, as united to the second Person of the Trinity, and at present in a state of exaltation. In that nature he executed his offices during his residence upon earth, and in the same nature he continues to perform the duties of his priesthood. It is now glorified; but it is essentially the same as it was in its state of humiliation. It then was, and it still is, a creature, and consequently is dependent upon God, and cannot therefore be dishonoured or degraded by an act which flows from that dependence, or belongs to any office with which it is invested. We have seen that it was not deified when it became the nature of him who is God; and although, being now above all want, the man Christ Jesus does not stand in need of prayers for himself, as related to men, who are encompassed with sins and infirmities, and have no resources in themselves, he may be conceived to pray for them without any diminution of his dignity. What, indeed, can be more honourable to him than to interpose between God and the human race, and to obtain, by his requests, the supplies of the Holy Spirit, by which thousands and millions are sanctified and comforted?

Prayer, among men, signifies not only mental desire, but also the use of words in which the desire is expressed. Whether it has the same meaning when it is ascribed to our Intercessor in heaven, we are unable to determine. We are certain that, even upon earth, words are not necessary to inform God of our desires, although, in respect of ourselves and others, they serve a variety of valuable purposes. It is possible, therefore, that they are not employed in the intercession of Christ, and that it is represented as consisting in praying to the Father, solely in accommodation to our ideas and usages, while nothing more is meant than that he desires the salvation of his people, and his desire is known to his Father. But we do not venture to deliver a positive opinion upon a point so obscure, and the determination of which would contribute nothing to our edification.

But although the prayer of Christ, in his present state, is materially the same with that of men, we must separate from our notion of his intercession every adjunct which arises from human infirmity, and conceive of it as different from the prayers which he offered up upon earth, "with strong crying and tears."† At the same time, we must beware of going to the opposite extreme, as some Divines have done, who talk of his intercession as authoritative. They do not mean that his prayers are commands, peremptory

* John x. 16. † Acts xxvi. 18. ‡ Eph. i. 3.
‖ John x. 11. § John xvii. 9, 20.

* John i. 48. † Heb. v. 7.

orders that what he asks should be done, but that he speaks as one who has a right to be heard. Yet, although it be true that he has a title to receive the blessings of salvation for his people, because he purchased them with his blood, it would be altogether improper to suppose, that the knowledge of this right gives such a tone to his prayers as would change them into simple volitions. This would be improper, because they are the prayers of one who, whatever is his present dignity, and how great soever is his merit, still sustains the character of a minister or servant, and because it would destroy the nature of intercession, by substituting for desire an intimation of will. To intercede, is to ask something from another. Now, although our Redeemer does not ask like us, who ought to be humble from a consciousness of unworthiness, yet he undoubtedly continues to feel, and to express, the same reverence for the majesty and authority of his Father, by which he was distinguished upon earth. The passage upon which this view of his intercession is founded, gives countenance to it only as it appears in translations, and particularly in our own: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."* Some critics have supposed that the word θελω, *I will*, is expressive of authority. It is acknowledged that it does sometimes convey this idea; but it is only from the circumstances in which it is used that this sense can be inferred; because, in other cases, and, I may add, most frequently, it merely imports simple volition, or desire. When our Lord said to the Syrophenician woman, γενηθητω σοι ὡς θελεις, "Be it unto thee even as thou *will*,"† θελω can admit the sense only of *desiring* or *wishing*. The meaning is evidently the same, when he said to the two sons of Zebedee, τι θελετε ποιησω ὑμιν; "What *would* ye that I should do for you?"‡ It would be easy to make a large collection of examples. The common interpretation of the word, therefore, should be retained, unless there be a good reason for deviating from it; and in the present case there is none, except the mistaken idea that, by introducing the notion of authority, we shall add dignity to the intercession of Christ, and more clearly discriminate between his prayers and those of sinful men. But critics and commentators should beware of forming doctrines, however plausible, and even although true, from passages and words in which they are not contained. They have committed this error, I apprehend, in the case before us. They have affixed an arbitrary sense to the verb θελω, and, in doing so, have missed their own end; for, in attempting to give a more exalted idea of the intercession of Christ, they have destroyed its nature, as was formerly observed, by representing it, not as prayer, which he himself calls it, but as an authoritative volition. The proper translation of the word is not *volo*, but *velim*, in Latin; and in English, not *I will*, but *I would*; that is, 'I *desire* that those whom thou hast given me may be with me.'

I shall now point out, in some particulars, the subject of his intercession.

First, He prays that his disciples may be preserved in a state of grace: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."‖ The blessing for which he prays is protection, not from the violence of men, but from the evil of sin, or the evil one, "who, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." One great design of his intercession is, to prevent his followers from being overcome by temptation, from yielding to the terrors and allurements by which their constancy is tried, and to cherish the principle of grace in their souls, exposed as it is to the operation of causes which are hostile to its growth, and threaten its very existence. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."* We learn from the example of Peter, to what length a believer would go, if he were left to himself. In the moment of peril, he denied his Lord; and, adding profaneness to treachery, he denied him with oaths and imprecations. What restrained him from a total renunciation of his connexion with Christ, and from becoming a final apostate, like Judas? It was the prayer of our Intercessor which upheld his wavering faith, as his arm had once saved him from sinking in the water, and rekindled the dying flame of love in his breast. It is a consoling truth, that believers cannot fall from a state of grace; but their stability is not owing to their own wisdom, and vigilance, and activity. "Because I live," says their Redeemer, "ye shall live also."† By seasonable but imperceptible communications of grace, the tendency of their hearts to evil is checked before it has carried them beyond a state of salvation; their holy dispositions, however faint and languid they may become, are preserved from expiring; and they live on, amidst fears, and dangers, and failures, till the feeble germ of life burst forth into immortal vigour and luxuriance.

Secondly, He prays that their persons and services may be accepted. When they first believed, they were received into the favour of God; but they could not long retain themselves in this happy state. Every day they commit sin; which implies the same moral turpitude, and the same guilt, in the case of a believer as of an unbeliever. Every day, therefore, the fellowship between God and them would be broken, if Christ did not continue to officiate in their name, and obtain, by his intercession, the pardon of their transgressions. His appearance before the throne of God secures, that, although they may incur the displeasure and chastisement of their heavenly Father, they shall not fall under his curse; that, although the comfortable sense of his love may be suspended, it shall not be utterly taken from them. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."‡ Their duties are holy, being performed under the influence of the Spirit of grace; but they are imperfect. There is often a mixture of improper motives. There is a want of intenseness of feeling and affection. The mind wanders in devotional exercises; and love is, in some degree, divided between God and the world. But the law requires absolute perfection, and its demands are not abated in consequence of the mediation of Christ. Hence, if the best duties of the saints were weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, they would be found not to be of standard weight. If God should act according to justice,—and this is his rule of procedure towards those who presume to approach to him in their own name,—they would be rejected. But this consequence, which would be fatal to the hopes of believers, is prevented by the interposition of our Saviour, who intercedes for their acceptance on the ground of his own merits. What is good in their works, God approves, because it is the effect of his own grace. What is evil he forgives, in consideration of the atonement which he offered for them, who now ministers continually before him. We are commanded "to offer to God the sacrifice of praise," and all our sacrifices, "by him,"‖ because they will be pleasing to God only when presented by his Son, who can so powerfully recommend them. The object of his intercession is, that the Holy Spirit may be given, to enable believers to walk in the path

* John xvii 24. † Matt. xv 28. ‡ Mark x. 36.
‖ John xvii. 11, 15.

* Luke xxii. 31. † John xiv. 19. ‡ 1 John ii. 1.
‖ Heb. xiii. 15.

of obedience, and so to assist their humble endeavours to serve God that they shall find favour in his sight. We are "accepted in the Beloved." "O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed."* It has been supposed, with much probability, that the following passage is a figurative description of this part of his intercession, and that he is the angel who is represented as ministering at the altar: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."†

In the third place, He answers the charges which are brought against his disciples. Satan is called "the accuser of the brethren," and is said "to accuse them before God day and night."‡ These are not words without meaning. We cannot give a distinct account of his proceedings; but it is evident that he does advance charges against the people of God, some of which are false, and require no refutation, as was the charge of hypocrisy against Job; but some also are true, being founded upon the sins which they have actually committed. If their consciences at the same time bear testimony against them, their minds must be in great distress, and they will feel the necessity of an advocate to plead their cause, and to prevent the sentence of condemnation from being pronounced, which they so justly deserve. Such an advocate is Jesus Christ, who replies to every accusation, and assigns valid reasons why his clients should be acquitted. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."‖ When Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua, the high priest, to resist him, "The Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" And the Angel said, the Angel of the covenant, who is here called JEHOVAH, "Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."§

Lastly, He prays for the eternal happiness of his followers in heaven. "I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, to behold my glory."¶ Our faithful High Priest will not desist from his work till it be finished. As he died, so he lives for his followers, and will continue to intercede for them till they come to the perfect enjoyment of salvation. Having gone into heaven, he will draw them to himself. Every man will follow in his order; and the mansions which he has prepared for them, will be filled with a glorious and happy company, redeemed with his blood, "out of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues." When the righteous die, we lament the loss which the church has sustained by the removal of persons whose wisdom and virtues edified and adorned it, and we regret that they have not been permitted to remain longer upon earth. When our pious friends are taken from us, we are apt to give way to the violence of our feelings, and to mourn as if a sad calamity had befallen them. But should we not consider, that the event which we deplore is to them unspeakable gain, the end of their faith, and the completion of their hope? They have gone to behold him whom they love, and to rejoice for ever in his presence. Should we not remember that, in this case, the prayers of Christ have prevailed over our wishes and entreaties? For why have they died at this time? Has death come by chance, or by the blind operation of natural causes? Have they fallen without special appointment? Had heaven no concern in what has taken place upon earth? If not a sparrow perishes without the knowledge of God, still less can it be supposed that a good man leaves the world without his call. His death is the answer of the Father to the prayer of his Son. It is the means of introducing into the presence of the Saviour, and into the embraces of his love, his dear disciples, for whom he shed his precious blood. He desires that they should be with him, and this messenger is sent to conduct them to their home. This is the reason that our tears, and sighs, and fervent supplications, were of no avail; for how could they succeed in opposition to the prayer of the all-powerful Intercessor! This is a pleasing view of the death of believers. It shows us that it is indeed a blessing to them; and, as it is calculated to moderate our sorrow, so it should make us pray for their life, with entire resignation to the will of the Head of the Church.

There is a passage, which, at first sight, may seem to contradict what has been said concerning the intercession of Christ in the heavenly state: "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you."* But, as in other passages he expressly affirms that he would pray for them, we must attempt to reconcile them with that now quoted; and the task is not difficult. His intention in the words before us was, not to deny that he would intercede for his followers, but to guard them against mistaking the design of his intercession, and thinking that there is some reluctance on the part of his Father to bestow blessings upon them, which his prayers were necessary to overcome. Accordingly, he adds—"For the Father himself loveth you; because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God."† He would have us know, and remember, that the love of the Father is the source of all spiritual blessings, and that his intercession is necessary only as the channel in which they are conveyed.

The Scripture speaks of the intercession of the Holy Ghost; but we must beware of conceiving of it as if it were of the same nature with the intercession of Christ. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered."‡ The Holy Ghost is not a mediator between us and God, for there is only one, the man Christ Jesus. He intercedes for believers not personally, but by his influences; not without them, but within them. Their prayers are not presented by him to the Father; but he enables them to intercede for themselves, by teaching them what they should pray for, and by exciting them to pray with importunity, and in the exercise of faith.

The intercession of Christ was typified by the entrance of the Jewish high priest into the most holy place, where he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices, and burnt incense before the mercy-seat. It is not, however, enough to say that such was the procedure under the legal economy, when we are inquiring into the reason of the intercession of our Saviour. It is certain that a type and a prophecy must be fulfilled; but neither the one nor the other is the cause of the event to which it relates. An event does not take place because it was prefigured or foretold; but the type was instituted and the prediction was delivered, because the event was predetermined. Jesus Christ does not intercede because the high priest of the law went into the holy of holies, after he had offered the anniversary

* Eph. i. 6. Ps. lxxxiv. 8, 9. † Rev. viii. 3, 4. ‡ Ib. xii. 10. ‖ Rom. viii. 33, 34. § Zech. iii. 2, 4. ¶ John xvii. 24.

* John xvi. 26. † Ib. 27. ‡ Rom. viii. 26.

atonement; but the high priest was appointed to appear before the propitiatory, to represent the ascension of our Redeemer, and his ministry in heaven.

The true reason of his intercession appears from some things which have been already said. The imperfection of the services of the saints requires that he should recommend them to God, because in themselves, even although they proceed from a principle of grace, they would not bear a strict examination, and according to the rules of justice would be rejected. There could be no acceptable religion without the intercession of Christ. His sacrifice upon the cross laid the foundation of religion; but it could not be maintained if he did not continue to mediate, and by the presentation of himself and his merits, to secure the covenant of peace from being broken. The dispensation of grace must be so conducted in every part of it, that the holiness of God shall shine with unclouded splendour. With this view he avoids immediate commerce with men, in the best of whom there are remains of sin. Between himself and them, he has placed our Redeemer, by whom all his perfections have been glorified, that, bestowing every favour upon men, and accepting their services solely for his sake, he may appear in the communications of his grace to be the Holy One, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon evil." Contemplating an awful Being who has published a law which demands perfection, and denounced punishment against every violation of it, the most eminent saints would be alarmed, and say, We cannot serve him. But the interposition of a person nearly related to them, who is a partaker of their nature, and has a feeling of their infirmities, authorises their humble confidence, and revives their expiring hopes. Conscious of defects in their best services, they yet venture to engage in them, because by him they are presented with acceptance to the Father. His intercession is necessary for the glory of God, and the encouragement of his people; and this is the reason that it constitutes an essential part of his priestly office. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."*

It is acknowledged by Christians of all denominations, if Unitarians are excepted, whose claim to the Christian name we do not admit, that our exalted Redeemer intercedes for us in the heavenly sanctuary; but by a large class of them, a doctrine is maintained which entrenches upon this part of his sacerdotal office. You will perceive that I refer to the church of Rome, which teaches that there are other intercessors with God, namely, angels and glorified saints. The council of Trent "commands all bishops and others, who are employed in instructing the people, to teach the faithful, according to the practice of the Catholic and Apostolic church from the earliest times, the consent of the Fathers, and the decrees of Holy Councils, that the saints reigning with Christ offer prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful to invoke them, and to betake ourselves to their prayers and assistance in order to obtain blessings from God through his Son; that those who deny that the saints, enjoying eternal felicity in heaven, ought to be invoked, or who assert either that they do not pray for men, or that the invocation of them is idolatry, and is contrary to the word of God, and injurious to the honour of Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, hold an impious opinion."† To prove that to employ the saints as intercessors, is not derogatory to the honour of Christ, or inconsistent with the acknowledgment that he is the only mediator, a distinction has been coined, of which there is not a vestige in the Scriptures, between a mediator of redemption and a mediator of intercession. The former character belongs exclusively to him; the latter is shared by the saints. The books of devotion in the Church of Rome, are full, not only of prayers to God that, for the merits and prayers of the saints, he would save the worshippers from guilt and eternal damnation, but also of prayers to them, that they would pray to God in behalf of those who call upon them. How often is the blessed Virgin in particular thus addressed, "*Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis.*" "*Sancta Dei genetrix, ora pro nobis.*" "*Virgo virginum, ora pro nobis.*"* Similar prayers are offered up to all the apostles, and to all the saints in the calendar, and likewise to the angels who are also advanced to the dignity of mediators. "*Sancte Michael, ora pro nobis.*" "*Sancte Gabriel, ora pro nobis.*" "*Omnes sancti angeli et archangeli, orate pro nobis.*"†

In the primitive times, those who had died for religion were held in great veneration. Their names were mentioned with honour: the day of their martyrdom, which was called their birth-day, because they then entered into glory, was celebrated, and the Christians assembled at their tombs to offer up prayers to God, and to excite themselves to faith and patience by the solemn recollection of their virtues. But they did not worship the saints, nor for the first three centuries was any mediator acknowledged but Jesus Christ alone. In process of time, however, men began to give high titles to the departed saints, and to address them, at first, it may be, after the manner of an orator apostrophising those who are absent; but those addresses grew into prayers, the object of which was to obtain their good offices in heaven, where their interest was supposed to be great. "Those who are well," says Theodorit, "ask the preservation of their health, and those who are struggling with any disease, deliverance from their sufferings; the childless ask children, and such as are sent upon a journey entreat the saints to be their companions and their guides on the way; not approaching to them as gods, but supplicating them as divine men, and beseeching them to be intercessors for them." Thus the foundation was laid, upon which an immense fabric of idolatry was reared by the church of Rome, where the worship of saints is established by law. These are such persons as the pope has canonized, or declared by a solemn act to be proper objects of worship. Some of them were unquestionably good men, although unworthy of this honour, which is due only to God and his Son; but others are doubtful characters, or ruffians and impostors, whose names should not be mentioned but in terms of execration, or imaginary beings who never existed but in fabulous legends.

Protestants have, with good reason, rejected the notion of angelical and human intercessors. There is not one word in the Scriptures to favour it, or rather it is expressly condemned by them. The worship of angels is one of the corruptions against which Paul warns us, in the Epistle to the Colossians; and still less, surely, is religious honour to be given to the saints, who are of an inferior nature. The pretended practice of the church from the earliest ages, (I call it pretended, because the practice was unknown in the primitive times,) the consent of fathers and the decrees of councils, are lighter than vanity in the estimation of those who consider human authority as of no value in matters of religion, and weigh all doctrines in the balance of the sanctuary. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

* Heb. vii. 25, 26.

† Concil. Trident. Decreta, Sess. xxv. *de invocatione, &c.*

* Holy Mary, pray for us. Holy mother of God, pray for us. Virgin of virgins, pray for us.

† Holy Michael, pray for us. Holy Gabriel, pray for us. All holy angels and archangels, pray for us.

It is unnecessary to add any other argument against this doctrine, besides the want of scriptural authority; but we may observe, that the intercession of the saints presupposes that they hear our prayers, and are acquainted with our circumstances. But this is a gratuitous assumption. How can Papists prove that the saints in heaven know what is passing upon earth? To us it should seem, that being creatures limited in their powers, and confined to a particular place, they cannot, in a world so distant from ours, see what is done and hear what is spoken by men. The doctrine under consideration imports that they are omnipresent or omniscient; for how could the blessed virgin, for example, otherwise have any knowledge of the prayers which are addressed to her at the same time in ten thousand places, and it may be by millions of individuals? To say that the saints see all things in God, must mean, if it have any meaning, that they are endowed with the gift of omniscience, or at least that God reveals to them what he knows; that is, when men pray to the saints, God informs them that they are praying, and what are their desires, and thus qualifies them to be their intercessors. But where is the proof? For all this we have no evidence, except the evidence of the infallible church, the mother of lies and all abominations.

It has been said, that it is as lawful to ask the saints in heaven, as the saints upon earth, to pray for us. Between the two cases, however, there is this difference, that we have a command in the one case, but none in the other; that the saints on earth hear us, while we have reason to think that those in heaven do not; that we do not pray to the saints upon earth, but merely request them; and that we do not consider them as intercessors in the sense of the Roman church, but simply as friends who will join with us in supplication to him who is the hearer of prayer. We use no such form as the following, but look upon it as in the highest degree impious, although it is found among the prayers of the Antichristian church: "Let the intercession of such a person, we beseech thee, O Lord, recommend us, that what we cannot obtain by our own merits, we may procure by his patronage."

I would ask the abettors of this idolatrous worship, Why should the saints intercede for us? Is it because Jesus Christ has not interest enough with his Father to obtain for us the blessings which we need? This, I presume, they will not dare to affirm, in the face of the express declaration, that he is able, by his intercession, to save us to the uttermost? Is it because he is so great that we may not venture upon an immediate approach to him? This notion is contrary to his own invitation to come to him, which is accompanied with a promise of rest to our souls. Is it because the saints are more nearly allied to us, being men like ourselves? The supposition is false, because our High Priest is also a man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and has had full experience of our infirmities. Is it because the saints are more disposed to sympathise with us? Here also they err to their own ruin, and the dishonour of our Redeemer, who as much excels all angels and all men in love and pity, as in dignity. "We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are."* Upon him alone, therefore, we will depond, and say, in opposition both to Popish and to Pagan idolatry, which are indeed substantially the same, with only a change of names, "Though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."† And if some men will still put their trust in beings, great in power, it is acknowledged, and elevated to the highest honours, but less than nothing when compared with Him upon whom we rely, we will add, "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges."*

* Heb. iv. 15. † 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6.

LECTURE LX.

CHRIST'S STATE OF HUMILIATION.

Distinction between the Condescension and Humiliation of Christ.—Circumstances of Humiliation; in his Birth, his Subjection to the Law, the Events of his Life, his Death, and his Burial.—Opinions respecting his "Descent into Hell."

There are two states in which our Redeemer may be viewed, very different in themselves, but both necessary to the execution of his offices. The one exhibits him humbled and abased; the other exhibits him exalted and glorified. The first was not expected by the Jews, for reasons well known, and formerly mentioned. Their notions were natural to men who, disregarding the Scriptures, or attending to those parts of them alone which were congenial to their feelings and inclinations, permitted imagination to fill up the general outline of the character of the Messiah, as the deliverer of the people of God. What, indeed, should any man have expected when he first heard of the descent of the Son of God to the earth, but that he would appear in circumstances corresponding to his native dignity, and be revealed to mortal eyes by the rays of his Godhead, giving splendor to the veil of humanity which attempered his glory to our weakness? Might it not have been expected that his advent would be signalized by signs in heaven, and signs on earth; that the celestial spirits would wait upon him in a visible form; that princes and kings would lay their crowns and sceptres at his feet; that all the tribes of mankind, and in particular the nation of the Jews, would welcome him with shouts of joy and triumph; and that now, if upon any occasion, the words of prophecy would receive a literal fulfilment, that seas, and mountains, and forests, would break out into a universal chorus of praise? "But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts." Our Saviour did not come unnoticed to all the world, though but few were apprised of the arrival of the illustrious visitant. A great part of his life was spent in privacy and obscurity; when he came forward upon the public stage, he had to encounter the contempt and ridicule of the majority of his countrymen, and his short career terminated in ignominy and blood. All this, although foretold by the prophets, had been overlooked by the Jews, and hence the bitter disappointment which they felt, and the scorn with which they rejected his claims: "How can this man save us!"

The design of this lecture is to trace the several steps of his humiliation.

A distinction has been made between the condescension and the humiliation of Christ; the former consisting in the assumption of our nature, and the latter in his subsequent abasement and sufferings. The reason why the assumption of our nature is not accounted a part of his humiliation, is, that he retains it in his state of exaltation. The distinction seems to be favoured by Paul, who represents him as first "being made in the likeness of men," and then "when he was found in fashion as a man, humbling himself, and becoming obedient to the death of the cross."† Perhaps this is a more accurate view of the subject; but it has not been always attended to by Theological writers, some of whom have considered the incarnation as a part of his humiliation. As we have already spoken of the incar-

* Deut. xxxii. 31. † Phil. ii. 7, 8.

nation, it is not necessary to settle the propriety of introducing it at present.

Jesus Christ did not bring his assumed nature from heaven, as some have dreamed, affirming that the virgin was merely the conduit or channel through which it passed; nor was it formed like the body of Adam, out of the dust of the ground. It was, indeed, miraculously conceived; but it was composed, like the body of every human being, of the substance of his mother. He was literally "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." Had his nature not been derived from the same stock with ours, but only resembled it, there would not have been such a relation between us as should have rendered his mediation available for our good. If it was necessary that the precepts of the law which we had violated, should be fulfilled, and its penalty should be executed, the surety must be one of ourselves, that his obedience and sufferings might be so far accounted ours, as to be imputed to us for our justification. Now, there was only one way in which he could be a partaker of our nature, namely, by being conceived and born of a woman; and surely it was the first step of his humiliation, that he submitted to a process by which, though all things were created by him, he was placed upon a level with his own creatures. He thus became a child, which, although it possesses all the elements of our nature, is considered as an imperfect being, because its faculties are in a dormant state; and, although destined afterwards to display the powers of intellect, it differs only in shape from the young of the irrational tribes. As we have no reason to suppose that, at this period, there was any other distinction between him and other infants, except his exemption from the taint of original sin, we may say that, when he was born, he knew not into what place he had come, was capable only of those sensations which every living being must feel as soon as it comes into contact with external objects, without being able to reflect upon them, and was helpless and entirely dependent upon others. Let us remember, that we are describing the state of him who is now "King of kings," and "Lord of lords," and was then, "God over all blessed for ever." The apostle Paul, when speaking of this subject, makes use of a very strong expression, ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν,* which our translators have rendered with a license in which they have rarely indulged: "He made himself of no reputation;" while they ought to have said, "He emptied himself."† It is evident that Paul does not mean that he divested himself of his glory literally, but only economically; that is, he as effectually concealed it as if he had laid it entirely aside. No trace of Divine perfections could be seen in a new-born child. He who is greater than all, appeared in the lowest stage of human existence.

In addition to the circumstance of his birth, let us attend to the meanness of his condition. Judging according to our ideas of fitness, we might have expected that he would be the son of a mighty princess; that the place of his birth would be a magnificent palace; and that the king and the nobles of Judea would be assembled to receive, with every demonstration of reverence and joy, this wonderful child, whose career would be so glorious, and whose future empire would extend over heaven and earth. But this expectation was not realized in a single particular. There were, indeed, some circumstances which shed a transient splendour on his birth, as the appearance of angels, who announced it to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, and the visit of the eastern Magi, who, conducted by a miraculous star, came to adore him, and to present their gifts. God would not permit his Son to come into the world altogether unnoticed; and, in his deepest abasement, he bore testimony to him whom men despised, by signs and wonders. But, in every other respect, nothing could be more lowly than his entrance upon this earthly scene. His mother, indeed, was a descendant from the family which once swayed the sceptre in Jerusalem; but this was only a nominal honour, which did not protect her and her offspring from the contempt with which poverty is regarded by the world. It is an empty homage which is paid to the children of kings, who, for ages, have ceased to reign; and the honours of blood are forgotten when all their former glory is obscured by the meanness of their present condition. Mary was a woman in the most humble rank of society; and her husband was a mechanic, who earned his bread by the labour of his hands. The most illustrious female, it is true, was unworthy to be the mother of the Son of God, and her station would have reflected no dignity upon him; but we must judge, at present, by a human standard, and, in this view, he humbled himself, when he stooped to be born of the wife of a carpenter.

Conformable to the lowly station of his mother, was the place where he first drew the breath of life. He was born in Bethlehem, that prophecy might be fulfilled; but Bethlehem was not the chief city of the kingdom. It was little among the thousands of Judah, celebrated, indeed, as the city of David, but a small town at some distance from the capital. In Bethlehem, although the city of David, his illustrious Son did not meet with an honourable reception. When Joseph and Mary arrived there, it was so crowded with strangers, who had assembled in obedience to the decree of the emperor, to be enrolled, that there was no room for them in the inn. They, therefore, took up their residence in a stable; and there was he brought forth who was to rule over the house of Jacob for ever. In this obscure manner did he make his appearance upon earth. No person knew who he was but his parents, and a few shepherds who had received information from a heavenly messenger. Others, who might accidentally hear of the event, would consider him as the lowest of the low, on account of the humble circumstances of his parents, and the unusual place of his nativity. Who would have thought of searching for the Redeemer of Israel, and the Son of the Most High, in an out-house appropriated to the use of cattle? Who would have supposed, if he had by chance seen an infant lying in a manger, and attended by two unknown individuals, that this was he of whose advent and glory prophets had spoken in strains of enraptured eloquence? Who could have recognised in this unpromising form, the Saviour of the human race, the future Judge of angels and men?

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."* Attend to the important fact, that he was made under the law, for it was an eminent part of his humiliation, and, at the same time, accounts for the other particulars in which it consisted. You will perhaps ask, how he could be humbled by subjection to the law, since this is the necessary condition of all men, and all angels; and it is the glory as well as the happiness of a creature, to obey his Creator? It is not enough to say, that his humiliation appears from the consideration, that he of whom we speak was more than a creature, and, in his Divine person, was above the law; for, although his subjection to it was the act of his person, as were all his mediatorial acts, yet it was only as a man that he was or could be under its authority. Let it be observed, that when Christ is said to be under the law, we do not consider it simply as the standard of duty, but as possessing that form which it acquired when God converted it into a covenant with men. He was made under the law, in all the obliga-

* He emptied, or divested himself. † Phil. ii. 7.

* Gal. iv. 4.

tions which it imposed upon us, both in requiring obedience to its precepts as the condition of life, and denouncing its penalty as the recompense of our transgressions. The law regarded him as the representative of sinners, and demanded the unabated fulfilment of its terms. It was enjoined upon him, who, in consequence of his relation to the second Person of the Trinity, had a title to the highest honour and felicity, and might have ascended to reign in heaven as soon as he was born upon earth, to go through a course of obedience amidst toil and sorrow, in order to obtain eternal glory for himself, as well as eternal life for his followers. Notwithstanding his unspotted purity, he was treated by the law as if he had been a sinner. It arraigned him before its tribunal, and condemned him to bear the punishment which it had pronounced upon the guilty. By being made under the law, he was made under the curse. The curse is the sentence by which the transgressor is doomed to suffer; and he was subjected to it, by becoming our surety. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."* A more humiliating situation cannot be conceived. The Son of God is confounded with the meanest and vilest of mankind. The law made no concession to his dignity; it waived none of its rights in his favour. It spoke to him with the same high tone of authority in which it addresses a mere mortal; it was equally strict and unrelenting in its demands; nothing less would satisfy it than his blood, as a compensation for the wrongs which it had sustained from those whom he had undertaken to befriend.

The subjection of our Saviour to the law, accounts for all the other parts of his humiliation. As it would not have been fitting, that he who stood in the room of sinners, should have spent his days in ease and splendour, so his degradation and sorrows were necessary to fulfil the demands of the law. The Deliverer of mankind must submit to the labour, and suffering, and death to which they were doomed, because it was not by an exertion of physical strength that his design should be accomplished, but by such moral acts as should uphold the authority and honour of the law, although those who had transgressed it were forgiven. You perceive, then, that the humiliation of Christ was not the consequence of an arbitrary appointment. It was an essential part of a great plan, originating in the wisdom and justice of God, for the manifestation of the glory of his attributes in the redemption of the world. "Although he was rich, yet, for our sakes, he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich."†

We know little about our Saviour in the early part of his life, till, at twelve years of age, he appeared in the temple, and astonished the doctors by his wisdom; except that, for the preservation of his life from the murderous designs of Herod, he was carried by his parents into Egypt, and brought back to Galilee when the danger was past. Many stories, indeed, are to be found in an ancient composition, called the Gospel of the Infancy; but they rest entirely upon the authority of the anonymous author, and are too silly and absurd to deserve a moment's attention. While a child, he was dependent, like other children, upon others; and, although there is no doubt that the blessed Virgin treated him with the most tender affection, it was impossible that he should not have suffered through the inattention, and neglect, and awkwardness of those to whose care he was occasionally committed. Living among imperfect mortals, he must have experienced the effect of their ignorance and irregular tempers, especially while his mental faculties, not being sufficiently matured, nor his bodily strength confirmed, he was not yet qualified to manage himself. His food might be withheld, when his appetite craved it; his rest might be disturbed by unseasonable intrusions; his mind might be vexed by the peevishness and frowardness of those with whom he associated. These things are only matters of conjecture; but they are by no means improbable, as he was placed in circumstances exactly similar to those in which we find ourselves. It may be thought, indeed, that, as the Son of God, he would always command profound reverence, and uninterrupted attention to his comfort; but amidst the familiarity of daily intercourse, even his parents might sometimes think of him only as a child; and to his fellow-creatures and neighbours, perhaps, his dignity was unknown. Of this there can be no doubt, that it was humiliating to such a person, to be found in a situation in which he was indebted to others for the necessaries of life, and for instruction and protection, and was exposed to the rudeness of the young and the caprice of the old. When he grew up, it is probable that he was engaged in the same occupation with Joseph, his reputed father, whose circumstances might render it necessary that Jesus should contribute his labour for the maintenance of the family. Thus the Lord of all was reduced to a level with the lowest of the human race, and literally underwent that part of the curse, which doomed man "to eat bread in the sweat of his face." He is called not only ὁ του τεκτονος υἱος,* *the carpenter's son*, but ὁ τεκτων, *the carpenter*.† The word is equivalent to the Latin term *faber*, which signifies a workman, the nature of whose employment is specified by the adjectives, *ferrarius*, *ærarius*, *ligneus*, denoting respectively *a blacksmith*, *a brazier* or *coppersmith*, *a carpenter* or *worker in wood*. The last is the occupation in which our Saviour is commonly supposed to have been engaged.‡

Of his public life, there is a more ample detail in the Gospels, from the narrative in which it appears, that he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." We have no reason to think that he was subject to disease. We never read that he was sick, or that he suffered any of those pains which are inflicted upon us by alterations in the state of our bodies. As he was perfectly holy, there were no seeds of decay and dissolution in his frame. But he experienced all the other sinless infirmities of our nature. He was hungry, and thirsty, and weary; he felt the inconvenience of excessive cold and heat: and, as he was endowed with the common passions and feelings of human nature, he was not a stranger to disappointment, and vexation, and sorrow, and the pangs of unrequited kindness and violated friendship.

To those evils were added the hardships of poverty. He became literally poor when he assumed our nature; and, in doing so, he humbled himself, because he was originally rich. The Possessor of heaven and earth had not where to lay his head; he could not call the lowliest cottage in Judea his own. Women ministered to him; he was often indebted for his daily bread to the hospitality of others; and, when the tribute for the use of the temple was demanded from him, he found it necessary to work a miracle to obtain the small sum of a *stater*, equal in value to half-a-crown, for himself and Peter.

During his public ministry, if he was admired and followed by some, he was hated and persecuted by others. The indignation of the proud rulers, and worldly-minded Pharisees, was caused by the loftiness of his pretensions, and the lowliness of his condition. His doctrine gave them particular offence, because it was levelled against their corruptions of religion, and exposed to public view their base dispositions, and the

* Gal. iii. 13. † 2 Cor. viii. 9.

* Matt. xiii. 55. † Mark. vi. 3.
‡ Justin Mart. Dial. cum Trypho.

crimes in which they secretly indulged. Their rage and malice were vented in terms of obloquy, and every opprobrious name was applied to him, to stain his reputation, and render him odious in the eyes of the people. He was called a glutton, and a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners, and an emissary of Satan, who, in concert with that spirit, and aided by his power, was carrying on a nefarious design of blasphemy and wickedness. To these efforts of malignity he was not insensible, notwithstanding his consciousness of perfect innocence. Hence he expresses his feelings in the following affecting language: "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none."*

Men of flesh and blood were not the only enemies with whom he had to contend. The hostility of the old serpent was awakened by the appearance of the seed of the woman, against whom he directed his malicious, but ineffectual efforts. Immediately after his baptism, he was carried into the wilderness by the devil, where, for forty days, he was exposed to his temptations, and overcame them; not, however, we may be certain, without enduring much mental uneasiness, arising from the importunate and impudent solicitations of his adversary, and from the abhorrence which his impious suggestions excited. No subsequent opportunity of harassing him would be neglected by the vigilant and unwearied malignity of the alarmed and enraged spirit, whose kingdom he had come to overthrow. Of his final assault upon him at the close of his life, we have a hint, and only a hint, so that we cannot explain in what manner it was conducted, nor tell what trouble it caused to his illustrious opponent: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."† And again, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness."‡ This, however, we know, that, by his immediate temptations, and by stirring up wicked men to betray and crucify him, he accomplished what had been foretold from the beginning, that the heel of our Saviour should be bruised.

All these sufferings were severe; but they were light when compared with the sorrow which he felt from a sense of Divine wrath. The wrath of God does not signify furious anger, as in the case of men, but calm displeasure against sin, expressed in the punishment of offenders. Our Lord Jesus Christ was the object of it, not considered in himself, for he was the beloved Son of God, but as the representative of the guilty, who had engaged to "bear their griefs, and carry their sorrows." It was with our sins that his Father was displeased; and as our Saviour had made them his own in a legal sense, by the voluntary susception of the office of our surety, he experienced the effects of the Divine anger, not only in bodily pain, but also in mental anguish. The scene exhibited in the garden of Gethsemane was awful: "Being in agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."‖ An agony signifies, in this case, a violent agitation of the mind, in which every excruciating feeling was mingled, except remorse and despair. The intensity of his anguish was demonstrated by the effect upon his corporeal frame. It has been questioned, whether this was literally a bloody sweat, or only resembled blood in the largeness of the drops. On the one hand, we may conceive his body to have been agitated to such a degree by the commotion of his mind, that a part of the blood was forced from the veins, and mingled with the other moisture which exuded from his pores. On the other, we may plead that the expression used by the evangelist necessarily implies no more than resemblance, ὡσει θρόμβοι αἵματος, which is rendered in our version, *as it were great drops of blood*. Without venturing upon a positive decision of this question, although the latter opinion seems to be more probable, we observe that the agony of his mind must have been dreadful; for, even upon the lowest supposition, what could have produced such profuse perspiration in the open air, at a season when the night may be presumed to have been cold, and in a person of so much fortitude and self-command, but an intensity of mental feeling, which cannot be accounted for by any natural cause? The causes of his agony which some men have assigned, with a view to evade the evidence which it affords of the expiatory nature of his sufferings, are manifestly inadequate. To talk of its arising from the foresight of the treachery of Judas, the desertion of his disciples, the unbelief of the Jews, and the wickedness of mankind, is to say any thing rather than acknowledge the truth; and to suppose that it arose from the fear of death, would be to degrade him below his own followers, many of whom encountered death in as terrible a form, not only with composure, but with triumph. Nothing but the burden of our guilt could have made him lie prostrate on the ground; nothing but an appalling sense of Almighty vengeance could have extorted from him the thrice-repeated prayer: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Bitter must have been the ingredients of a cup, which he would have put away from his lips, although it was presented to him by the hand of his Father, and he had long purposed to drink it. How profound was his humiliation! We see him in extreme anguish, giving signs of ineffable distress by the agitation of his body; shedding tears, and uttering vehement cries; kneeling in the posture of a suppliant, and sinking to the earth under the dreadful pressure of his woes.

But his sorrows were not yet at an end. The solemnity of this scene was disturbed by the intrusion of a band of ruffians, who, in obedience to the command of their masters, rudely laid hold upon him, and dragged him as a felon to the tribunal of the high-priest, where he was accused of the foulest crimes, and subjected to every indignity. He was reviled and insulted in all the forms which inveterate and unmanly hostility could invent: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting."* There, at the judgment-seat of Pilate, and in the presence of Herod and his courtiers, he was treated as the vilest of mankind, and at last was delivered up as a victim to the clamour of the rabble. We then see him led forth to Calvary, and nailed to a cross, on which he hung for some hours, till he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Of the various modes of taking away life by violence, crucifixion is probably the most tormenting. It is one of the many contrivances of barbarity, the object of which is to make the unhappy sufferer feel himself dying. He was fixed to the cross with nails driven through his hands and his feet. Besides the exquisite pain caused by the perforation of so many parts full of nerves, which are the instruments of sensation, great torment must have arisen from the distension of his body, the forcible stretching of its joints and sinews by its own weight. To this circumstance he alludes in the twenty-second Psalm: "I may tell all my bones." "All my bones are out of joint."† There are some kinds of torture, which, by their severity, bring speedy relief. Nature sinks under them, and is released. As, in crucifixion, no vital part was touched, life was sometimes protracted for days. Our Lord expired sooner than the malefactors on his right hand and on his left, perhaps because he was partly exhausted by his previous agony; but even his sufferings lasted for six tedious hours; for they began at nine

* Ps. lxix. 20. † John xiv. 30. ‡ Luke xxii. 53. ‖ Ib. 44.

* Is. l. 6. † Ps. xxii. 17, 14.

in the morning, and did not end till three in the afternoon.

Some modes of putting persons to death are deemed more honourable than others, although it is the merest fiction of imagination to attach an idea of honour to what is in its own nature a disgrace as well as a punishment. The most ignominious was reserved for our Saviour, who suffered the death of a slave. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment, but was accounted so infamous that it could not be inflicted on a Roman citizen; only the offscouring of mankind were nailed to the cross. The very manner, therefore, of our Saviour's death was a part of his humiliation. He was exhibited on Calvary as a man who had no civil rights, who was protected by no law, whom society regarded as an outcast; as one who had not only forfeited his life by his crimes, but deserved to be associated with the lowest and most worthless of our species. Accordingly, to add to the ignominy of his sufferings, and to express the utmost contempt for him, two malefactors were led forth to be crucified along with him; two robbers, as the word signifies which we have translated thieves, who, by their daring outrages, had called down upon their heads the just vengeance of the laws. In the midst of these he was crucified, as if he had been the worst of the three; and thus the prophecy was fulfilled, "And he was numbered with the transgressors."*

The last circumstance which demands our attention, is, that he suffered an accursed death; for the law of Moses had said, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."† There is some difficulty in settling the meaning of this denunciation. It cannot signify that every person who was hanged upon a tree, was doomed to eternal perdition; because the sentence which affixes the future state of men, depends no more upon the manner of their death than upon any other trivial circumstance. But whatever be its import, it is applied to our Saviour; and we are taught to consider the manner of his death as an indication that he died under the curse of the law. It was Pilate who condemned him to the cross; but the sentence was ratified at a higher tribunal, and with aggravations which the power of the Roman governor could not add to it. He died by the sentence of his Father acting as a righteous judge, and subjecting him to the punishment of sin. Great, therefore, as were his bodily torments, there were unseen sorrows which were far more severe; sorrows of the same kind with those which caused his agony in the garden, and the extremity of which drew from him that mournful complaint, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"‡

How great was his humiliation! The Lord of life and glory appeared like a common mortal, and was distinguished only by the intensity of his sufferings, and the state of complete dereliction in which he expired. The multitude looked on with unpitying eyes: heaven frowned in preternatural darkness, and all consolation was withheld from him.

We shall have finished this view of the humiliation of Christ when we have added, that his body being taken down from the cross, was committed to the tomb, where it remained in a state of insensibility for at least thirty-six hours. Had it been immediately restored to life, it would have been said that it did not die, but only fainted on the cross; and the evidence of his messiahship, which his resurrection affords, would have been weakened. Had it continued longer under the power of death, the natural process of corruption would have commenced, unless preserved by a miracle. But the Scripture had foretold that the "Holy One of God should not see corruption;"‖ and, accordingly, the time was abridged; and on the morning of the third day he arose in triumph from the grave.

When Joseph had taken down his body from the cross, he laid it in his own sepulchre, which he had hewn out of a rock. May we not observe in this circumstance an illustration of the poor and destitute condition to which he had descended? Although it was his own world in which he sojourned, yet he was in it, not as a Lord, but as a servant—not as a possessor, but as a stranger who has no interest in any thing around him. His entrance into it was humiliating; his passage through it was comfortless; and when at last it cast him out as one unworthy to breathe the air, and see the light of the sun, there was no place to receive him save a tomb which one of his disciples had prepared for himself. It was the sepulchre of a rich man—but its present tenant was poor indeed. Yet why, we may say, should he have had a sepulchre of his own? Other men may provide a solitary dwelling for their bodies, for the sleep of the grave is long. It is their last abode, of which they will keep possession for ages; for "man lieth down, and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."* But our blessed Lord was like a way-faring man, who tarries only for a night in some resting-place which he finds on the road. The next morning he hastens away from it, and pursues his journey to his home.

Our Redeemer stooped low indeed when he assumed our nature, but lower still when he submitted to be laid in the grave. This is the last degree of humiliation. All the glory of man is extinguished in the tomb. If we viewed his prosperity with an eye of indifference, we now pity him; if his splendour excited our envy, the feeling dies away and hostility relents, when he, who, like a flourishing tree, spread his branches around, now lies prostrate in the dust. Who is this that occupies the sepulchre of Joseph? Is it a prophet or a king? No; it is one greater than all prophets and kings, the Son of the living God, the Lord of heaven and earth; but there is now nothing to distinguish him from the meanest of the human race; the tongue which charmed thousands with its eloquence is mute, and the hand which controlled the powers of the visible and invisible world is unnerved. The shades of death have enveloped him, and silence reigns in his lonely abode.

In the Apostles' Creed, it is said that "Christ descended into hell." With respect to the meaning of this article, there has been a great diversity of opinion. Some have supposed it to signify his burial; and, at first, when his descent into hell was mentioned, his burial was omitted: but both are now found in the creed. Others, again, have interpreted it of the state of the dead, or death itself, and of the place of souls, which is divided into two regions, the one in which the patriarchs and saints who died before his coming were detained, and the other the receptacle of the souls of the damned. Some supposed that he went to the former to carry the patriarchs and saints with him to heaven; and others, that he went to the latter place to triumph over Satan, and by preaching the Gospel, to deliver such of his captives as should believe. These are notions which do not receive the least countenance from Scripture, and may be dismissed without wasting time in refuting them.

It would not be incumbent upon us to take notice of the article under consideration, as the creed in which it occurs, although bearing the name of the Apostles, is a composition long posterior to their age, were it not that its language is borrowed from the Scriptures, into the meaning of every part of which it is our duty to inquire. The following words are found in the sixteenth Psalm, and are applied to our Saviour by Peter, in the

* Is. liii. 12. † Gal. iii. 13. ‡ Matt. xxvii. 46.
‖ Ps. xvi. 10.

* Job xiv. 12.

second chapter of the Acts: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."* Ἅδης, which is the word used in the New Testament, is derived from *α privative* and ἀιδω, *I see*, or ἰδω, the infinitive of the second aorist. It signifies, therefore, the invisible state of the dead; and, although it may sometimes denote the grave, it admits of a more extensive sense, and comprehends the place of the soul. The same is the meaning of the Hebrew word, שאול, in the Old Testament. It is derived from שאל, *to ask*; and denotes the place concerning which inquiry is made, because it is unseen and unknown. The word *hell*, is now used for the place of the damned; but originally it signified something obscure and concealed, and is of much the same import with שאול and ἅδης. This, therefore, is the sense of the passage in the Psalms: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in the invisible state; nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." Our Saviour is speaking of his death, by which his soul and body would be separated; the one going into the unseen state, the other being laid in the grave. The words are a prediction of his resurrection, and are applied to this event by the apostle: "David, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."† God would bring back his soul from the invisible state, and reunite it to his body, before it was corrupted.—This explanation frees the passage from the perplexity in which it has been involved by those who, supposing שאול and ἅδης to signify only the grave, understood נפש and ψυχη, which we translate *soul*, to mean the body; and thus, besides affixing an unusual and unnatural meaning to these words, represented the two parts of the verse as tautological. The view which we have given, preserves them distinct, and retains the common sense of the terms. The receptacle of our Saviour's soul was the invisible state, and the place of his body was the grave.

The humiliation of Christ manifests the greatness of his love, the riches of his grace. It was for us, men, and for our salvation, that he assumed human nature, and abased himself to the dust of death. He drew a veil over his glory, that he might remove our reproach, and raise us to heavenly honours; he groaned and died, that we might obtain immortal felicity. He has acquired a title to our everlasting gratitude, by the most astonishing sacrifices.

Let us learn humility from his example. Pride should be for ever renounced by the followers of a lowly Saviour. Every part of his conduct, during his abode upon earth, is calculated to put it to shame; and we have in vain traced his progress from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary and the sepulchre of Joseph, if we retain our unbending attitude, and refuse to stoop to our brethren at the call of charity. The scene which we have contemplated should dispose us to condescend to the meanest, and to divest ourselves of every worldly honour, when we are called upon to do so for the glory of God. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."‡

LECTURE LXI.

CHRIST'S STATE OF EXALTATION.

The Resurrection of Christ—Preliminary Remarks Respecting it—Statement of the Evidence of his Resurrection.

Although, during the humiliation of our Saviour, a veil was drawn over his glory, yet some rays occasionally broke through, which manifested, to attentive spectators, his essential and official dignity. The sublime doctrines which he taught, the astonishing miracles which he performed, and the testimonies of the Divine approbation which were given to him, by voices and signs from heaven, proclaimed that he was the only-begotten Son of God, and the promised Redeemer of Israel. The dark scene of his death was illustrated by prodigies, which signified that he was no ordinary sufferer; for, at a time when there could be no natural eclipse of the sun, because the moon was in full opposition, there was darkness over all the land, from the sixth to the ninth hour; and when he expired there was a great earthquake, which splitted the rocks, and laid open the tombs, and the veil which concealed the holy of holies in the temple was torn, by invisible hands, from the top to the bottom. Even his burial was not without honour; for, although, he had been put to death in the most ignominious manner, and under the imputation of the greatest crimes, his body was wrapped in fine linen and precious spices, by two persons of high rank, and was deposited in a magnificent sepulchre.

These circumstances, however, gave only a partial relief to the deep gloom which had settled upon him. His life, from the manger to the tomb, was a course of profound abasement. It was not till his resurrection that the glory which was to follow his sufferings commenced. That event, which removed the ignominy of his cross, revived the hopes of his disciples, and is the sure foundation of our faith in him, it is the design of this lecture to consider.

It is related by the four evangelists, and referred to in innumerable places by the other writers of the New Testament, as a fact, of which no doubt was entertained among Christians; insomuch that, assuming it as a first principle universally acknowledged, they reason from it in support of the doctrines of the gospel, and for the confutation of errors. In the narratives of the evangelists there are some discrepancies, which have been represented by infidels as affecting their credibility. Learned men have taken great pains to remove the apparent contradictions, and to show how the different accounts may be reconciled. I shall not enter upon this discussion at present, but shall content myself with referring you to those who have treated directly of this subject, and of whom I shall mention two, to whose writings you have easy access,—West's Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; and the seventh preliminary Observation, and the one hundred and fiftieth section of Macknight's Harmony of the Four Gospels. Were we at present considering the Evangelists as inspired writers, it would be necessary to examine every thing in the account which they have left us that might seem to indicate that they are as fallible as other authors, and have actually erred; at present, however, we appeal to them, not in this character, but merely as persons who have related a fact of which they were competent witnesses.—Now, although we should allow that they are at variance in some particulars, this would not invalidate their testimony in the opinion of any reasonable man, as they all agree in the main fact, and differ only in some matters which are not of much importance. In other cases, we deem the evidence sufficient, when we find substantial truth with circumstantial variety; that is, when a number of witnesses positively attest the same fact, but disagree in some inferior points, which do not materially affect the truth of the general statement. Minute accordance rather awakens a suspicion of previous concert, while occasional discrepancy affords a strong presumption that the witnesses are independent, and that every man speaks from personal knowledge. The testimony of the Evangelists would, I have no doubt, be received as consistent and credible by any civil court, as not one of them has denied the

* Acts ii. 27. † Acts ii. 31. ‡ Matt. xi. 29.

great fact of the resurrection, or discovered the slightest hesitation in affirming it; and the differences among them, even although they were real, and not merely apparent, as has been satisfactorily shown, consist only in circumstances upon which the general truth of the history does not depend; as the precise time in the morning when the event took place, and the number of individuals who were present at a particular moment. It is manifest, that they did not write with a design to obviate objections; and that each of them, without considering what had been said, or might be said by others, recorded the event in the manner which occurred to his own mind. It is by comparing all their narratives, that we come to know the whole circumstances of the case, and are able to show how one account may be reconciled with another. There are some parts of profane history, the general truth of which no person calls in question, although the testimony of those who have recorded them, is far from agreeing, in a variety of points. Let any of you read the history of Cyrus, by Herodotus and Xenophon, and you will find not only a diversity, but a contradiction, in several important particulars; yet it was never doubted that there was such a man, who conquered Babylon, and performed the other exploits which antiquity has ascribed to him. There is a case more to our present purpose, because it is recent, and is related by eye-witnesses, and others who are supposed to have received information from eye-witnesses. Ten narratives have been published, of the attempt made by the late king of France* to escape, not long after the commencement of the revolution, which, in several points, contradict each other in the most wonderful and inexplicable manner, and furnish, it has been observed, a striking proof of the inaccuracy of human observation, and the infirmity of memory. Yet, notwithstanding the discrepancy among the witnesses with regard to the details, nothing is more firmly believed, than that the attempt was made, and did not succeed. We should have no reason to call in question the fact of the resurrection, although the differences in the narratives of the Evangelists were such, that we could not reconcile them, as they relate only to subordinate circumstances.

The account of the resurrection of our Saviour in the gospel of Matthew, which I shall quote, because it is the first, is as follows: "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him; lo, I have told you."† There is subjoined an account of the appearance of Christ to the women, and of his subsequent appearance in Galilee, which it is unnecessary to recite.

I shall make some preliminary observations, before I proceed to lay before you the evidence of our Saviour's resurrection. First, the event was not impossible, and, consequently, if sufficient evidence be produced, we ought to give credit to the narrative, however extraordinary it may appear. We indeed have not experienced such an event, having never seen any person raised from the dead; but as it would be a most irrational conclusion, that nothing is possible which we have not witnessed, so it cannot be denied that the cause assigned for the resurrection of Jesus was adequate. To a Theist, a man who believes the existence and almighty power of God, it will not seem incredible that he should raise the dead; there being no greater difficulty in the restoration of a body to life, than there was in originally forming it, and endowing it with a sentient and intelligent soul.

My second observation is, That if Jesus was the Messiah, his resurrection was necessary to vindicate his character from the charges with which it was loaded. The alleged crimes for which he was condemned to die, were imposture and blasphemy. The Jews, full of carnal ideas and expectations, did not believe that a man of an appearance so mean, and a condition so humble, could be the Son of God, and the great deliverer of their nation, whom their imaginations had invested with the attributes of worldly grandeur: it seemed to them that his claim to these dignities was arrogant and impious. As Providence had permitted him to fall into their hands, it might have been supposed that it sanctioned their proceedings; and this conclusion would have been fully confirmed, if he had remained in the state of the dead. It would then have appeared that they had acted with laudable zeal for the honour of the Most High, who will not give his glory to another, and had been ministers of divine justice in awarding due punishment to one whom their law pronounced to be unworthy to live. It would have appeared that, instead of purposing to save mankind from ignorance and sin, Jesus had come to deceive them with false pretences, to amuse them with delusive hopes, and to lead them to final perdition, by persuading them to apostatise from the living God, and commit themselves to him as their guide. But his return to life prevented the unfavourable inferences, which either friends or enemies might have drawn from his tragical end. His resurrection, by the power of his Father, demonstrated that he acknowledged him as his Son and his servant. He had permitted his life to be taken away, because he required it as a sacrifice for the sin of his people; he restored it, to show that the demands of justice were satisfied. Hence the Scripture says, that "he was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead,"* and that "the God of peace brought him again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant."† By this event, God acknowledged him to be his Son, and gave a solemn assurance that he is reconciled to guilty men.

A third observation is suggested by what has been now said, that our Saviour was raised by the power of his Father. Upon this fact depends the evidence, that he truly was what he affirmed himself to be. If God raised him from the dead, the sentence pronounced upon him by the Jews was reversed, and he who had expired in ignominy and torment was proved to be the Lord of glory. Sometimes, indeed, the New Testament ascribes the resurrection to our Saviour himself. Thus, we find him saying, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again;"‡ and when he speaks of his body under the image of a temple, he represents its restoration as his own work: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."‖ In both passages, the resurrection is attributed to him, because his power was exerted in this, as it is in other external acts, in concurrence with that of his Father; for as they are one in nature, they are united in operation; "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."§ But it is the Father who is usually represented as the agent in this event; and this is so frequently done, that it is unnecessary to refer to particular passages. According to the order established in

* Louis XVI.

† Matt. xxviii. 1—7.

* Rom. i. 4. † Heb. xiii. 20. ‡ John x. 18. ‖ Ib. ii. 19. § John v. 17.

the plan of redemption, the resurrection was not properly the work of the Son, but of the Father. Jesus died in obedience to his will; he offered himself upon the cross, to appease his justice; and, to speak in the figurative style which has been employed on this subject, as he had engaged, in the character of our surety, to pay the debt which he owed to God, it was fit and necessary that, from the hand of God, he should openly receive a discharge.

I observe, in the last place, that he was raised on the third day after his death. This was the time fixed by himself, and it was so well known, that his enemies were apprised of it. "Sir," the Jews said to Pilate, "we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again."* He died on the afternoon of Friday, and was buried before sunset, when the day ended according to the Jewish reckoning. This was the first day. At sunset the Jewish Sabbath commenced, during the whole of which he rested in the grave. This is the second day. When the sun set again, the third day commenced. On the ensuing morning, most probably between the dawn and sunrise, the soul of our Redeemer was re-united to his body, and he left the sepulchre of Joseph, the glorious conqueror of the king of terrors. It is common, in ordinary conversation, when we do not attend to logical accuracy, to put a whole day for only a part of it. According to this mode of speaking, Christ was three days in the grave. It would seem, that a revolution of the earth around its axis, which we call a day, the Jews sometimes called a day and a night. Retaining this form of expression, they would say of an event which took up a part of three days, that it was three days and three nights in accomplishing. It is in this way that we reconcile with the fact our Lord's own assertion, that "as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so should the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."† He used the language of his country; and his words were fulfilled, although he was not more than six or seven and thirty hours in the sepulchre, because these hours were made up of one whole day, and parts of two of those divisions of time, which the Jews called a day and a night. The time was long enough to show that he was really dead, but not so long as to permit his disciples to sink into despair. Their dejection was great, and their hopes were ready to expire, when he appeared to them, and turned their sorrow into joy: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."‡

But how do we know that Jesus Christ rose from the dead? The fact is denied by the Jews, and by infidels. Do we, who believe it, follow a cunningly devised fable, or does our faith rest upon a solid foundation? Persisting as we do, in maintaining the fact in the face of opposition, we should be able to give a reason of our hope to every man who asks us. We find an account of the resurrection in the Scriptures; but how do we know it to be true? on what grounds do we give credit to it? and what are the arguments by which we can demonstrate the reasonableness of our own faith, and repel the objections and cavils of unbelievers? I shall endeavour to lay before you a summary of the evidence upon which this important article of our religion depends.

First, The fact that the body of Jesus, which had been deposited in the sepulchre of Joseph, was missing, is undisputed. It has been acknowledged by all classes of men, by enemies as well as by friends, that by some means it was removed. Had it been in the power of the Jews to show it after the third day, the report of his resurrection would not have obtained circulation; or if it had gone abroad among the credulous vulgar, who remembered his prediction, it would have been instantly quashed. The story which was contrived to prevent the people from believing it, and which will be afterwards considered, was a confession that the body could not be found. This is the first step in the proof. Jesus, having been taken down from the cross, was buried, but when the sepulchre was examined on the third day, it was empty.

In the second place, The body was not carried away by the disciples. They were so alarmed and terrified when they saw him seized by the emissaries of the priests and rulers, that they cannot be conceived to have engaged in such an enterprise, which was manifestly full of danger; for it would be absurd to suppose that their fears had been allayed by his death, which was obviously calculated to increase them. But although, from some unaccountable cause, they had resumed their courage, and become bold at a moment when other men would have sunk into absolute despondency, the thing itself was impossible, because the sepulchre was strictly guarded by a band of soldiers, whom the unarmed disciples, unaccustomed to violence and blood, would not have ventured to encounter; not to say that forcible means would have completely defeated their design, even if they had been successful, as it would then have been known that there had not been a resurrection, but merely a removal of the body by his friends. To evade the argument from the disappearance of the body, notwithstanding the guard upon the sepulchre, the Jews industriously circulated a report that it was stolen by the disciples while the soldiers were asleep. Nothing, however, is more improbable than that a whole guard of soldiers should be asleep at their post, and especially of Roman soldiers, who were under the strictest discipline, knew that a severe punishment awaited them if they should neglect their duty, and in the present case, had received particular orders to be vigilant. In these circumstances, it is incredible that they should have all fallen asleep, and slept so soundly as not to be awakened by the rolling of the stone which closed the door of the sepulchre, and to give an opportunity to the disciples to accomplish their design in the most deliberate manner; for the body was not carried away in haste, but was stripped of the grave clothes, which were not scattered up and down, but regularly deposited in the tomb. The soldiers had not endured any uncommon fatigue by which they might have been overpowered. The watch had continued only about thirty-six hours; and during that period the guard had no doubt been changed. The story clumsily contrived by the Jewish rulers, contains internal evidence of falsehood. It makes the soldiers confess that they were asleep, and at the same time affirm what they could only have known if they had been awake. If all their senses were closed, how could they know that the disciples had stolen the body? For aught that they could tell, the theft had been committed by some other persons. How could they know that it had been stolen at all? The only fact which they were competent to attest, if they were really asleep, was, that when they awoke, the stone was rolled away and the body was gone. Whether it had been restored to life and had removed itself, or had been removed by the agency of others, they were manifestly unqualified to say. The story therefore, although that part of it had been true, which supposed the soldiers to be asleep, proves nothing against the solemn declaration of the disciples, that their Master was raised by the power of God.

In the third place, Although it had been possible for the disciples to remove the body of our Saviour, we cannot conceive what should have induced them to make the attempt. The transference of his body from one place to another would not have restored him to

* Matt. xxvii. 63. † Matt. xii. 40. ‡ John xx. 20.

life; and if he had continued under the power of death, it was of no importance to them in what spot his mortal remains were deposited. No place would have been more honourable than the sepulchre of Joseph. He was no longer their master, he was not the Son of God, he was not the messiah. He had excited hopes which he was not able to realize; he had completely deceived them, and was no more worthy of their attention. Why should they have put themselves to any trouble, or have exposed themselves to any danger on his account? Why should they have incurred the risk of being detected and punished by the Jews? It appears from the evangelical history, that the intention of taking him away had never entered into their minds. Several women visited the sepulchre early in the morning of the third day, when the Sabbath was past; but they came to weep over the body of their Lord, and to lay new spices upon it; and when they found that the body was not there, they were thrown into the greatest distress, considering its removal, perhaps, as the deed of his enemies, who envied him this honourable tomb. "Sir," said one of them to Jesus himself, whom in her confusion she supposed to be the gardener, "if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."*

In the fourth place, If Jesus did not rise from the dead, and the whole was a fraud contrived by the disciples to save themselves from the reproach of having been the dupes of an impostor, it is astonishing that it was never discovered. It is astonishing that a few simple and uneducated men should have been able to devise and execute a plan, which has eluded all search, and has obtained credit among the wise and learned, as well as among the vulgar, for the space of eighteen hundred years. No person is able to produce a similar instance. How has it happened that the secret has not transpired? Was there no Judas among the disciples, who would go and tell the chief priests and rulers all that he knew? Was there not one honest man among them who was compelled by his conscience to make a disclosure for the glory of God and the best interests of mankind? The disciples were strictly examined, and punished for preaching the resurrection, and threatened with severer treatment if they would not be silent; but they persisted in their original testimony. No flaw was ever discovered in the evidence, no contradiction, no hesitation. There was a boldness in their manner which confounded their adversaries, who, unable to refute their allegations, were compelled to supply the want of argument by violence and intimidation. Is this the character of false witnesses? Nay, there were traitors among them, men whom the fear of suffering and the love of the world prevailed upon to apostatise from the gospel; but not one of them was able to reveal a single circumstance, tending to impeach the truth of the resurrection. Had any such discovery been made, it would have been triumphantly published to check the progress of Christianity; but not a surmise of this kind is found in the records of antiquity. Many slanderous reports against the followers of Jesus were propagated; but there is not so much as a hint that the secret had been blabbed out, and the story of the resurrection had been proved to be an imposture.

In the fifth place, If Christ did not rise from the dead, it is impossible to account for the conduct of his disciples, who endeavoured to persuade the world that he had risen. Men, we know, may be very zealous in propagating a false opinion, which they themselves believe; there have been martyrs for error, as well as for truth. But who ever heard of a set of men, who devoted their time and talents, and exposed their life to hazard, with a view to establish a fact, of the falsity of which they were fully convinced? If Christ did not rise from the dead, the disciples knew that the story of his resurrection was an invention of their own. Why should they have been anxious to make others believe it? It appears, from what was formerly said, that it could not be from regard to their Master. The attachment to him, which they felt during his life, could not continue after his death, which had terminated his projects and their hopes, and proved irresistibly that in whatever way his miracles might be accounted for, he was not the Messiah. The natural tendency of this discovery, and of their bitter disappointment, was, by a violent revulsion, to turn their former love into fixed hatred, and, when the first emotions of surprise and shame were over, to make them the loudest in exclaiming against the deception which he had practised upon them. It could not be from a wish to support their own credit by perpetuating the imposture, for how could they expect to succeed in their design? Was the authority of fishermen and publicans so great, that their countrymen would be persuaded by their simple affirmation, of so great a miracle as the restoration of a dead body to life? Mankind are not commonly so credulous; and, in the present case, they were the less ready to give their assent upon insufficient evidence, because they were strongly prejudiced against our Saviour, on account of his humble appearance and his ignominious sufferings, which were at variance with all their ideas of the character and state of the messiah. It could not be from the expectation of worldly advantages, of which there was no prospect. Wealth and honours could not be looked for, till they had gained a number of proselytes; and no man in his senses could have calculated on a single proselyte, except among the dregs of the people, to a cause so unpopular in itself, and supported by advocates so ill qualified to recommend it. Toil, and reproach, and perils, and death, stared them in the face. The world would rise up in arms against them. They would be derided and despised by the Gentiles, to whom the resurrection of the body seemed incredible and impossible. They would be persecuted by the Jews, who would transfer their hatred from Jesus himself, to those who were endeavouring to rescue his name from infamy, and to uphold the error which they were so eager to crush. In the absence of all the usual motives of action, we must attribute their conduct to a full conviction of the fact, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."*

In the sixth place, Since it must be admitted, that there is no evidence of a design, on the part of the apostles, to impose upon the world by a fabricated story, it may be insinuated, that they were themselves deceived by the power of imagination, which, it is known, has sometimes subjected individuals to the most extraordinary delusions. They have fancied that they distinctly saw objects, which were mere phantoms of the brain. But there is not a single circumstance, in the present case, which will authorise us to account, in this way, for the conduct of the disciples. Their minds were not in that state of eager expectation which is favourable to the workings of fancy; for it appears that they were not looking for his resurrection, both from the visit of the women to the sepulchre, to see his body, and to lay fresh spices upon it, as if it had been to continue in the state of the dead; and from the incredulity of the rest, to whom, when they told them that he had risen, their words seemed as "idle tales."† The two disciples, on the road to Emmaus, expressed themselves in the language of despondency, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel;"‡ and, although they added, that some women who had been at the sepulchre, had reported that he

* John xx. 15.

* Acts iv. 20. † Luke xxiv. 11. ‡ Ib. 21.

was risen, they appear not to have believed them. In such a state of mind, there was no room for imagination to operate. It will be still more evident that they were not misled by it, if we consider that the appearances of Christ were frequent, not less than eight being recorded; besides, that many more may be supposed during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension; that some of them were made, not to a solitary individual, but to several of the disciples in company,—in one instance, to five hundred, who could not all be deceived; that the appearances were not transient, but lasted for a considerable time, so that the spectators had full leisure to examine them; that, while some of them were sudden, or without warning, others were the consequence of previous appointment; that they took place, for the most part at least, not in the night, when the mind is more subject to illusion, but in the day, when the disciples were composed, and their senses were awake; and, that the interviews were not distant and silent, but intimate and familiar, Jesus, having mingled with his followers, conversed freely with them, and gave them all the satisfaction which the most incredulous could demand, saying to one of them in particular, who was slow in giving his assent, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing."* When all these circumstances are considered, we may pronounce it to have been impossible that they should be deceived. The supposition, indeed, is so palpably absurd, that it would hardly be worth while to reason with a person who should seriously maintain it.

In the last place, To these arguments for the resurrection of Christ, founded on the competency and honesty of the apostles as witnesses, we may add the success of their preaching, which is inexplicable on any other hypothesis but the truth of their testimony. To what cause was it owing, that multitudes of Jews and Gentiles gave credit to their report, acknowledged a crucified man to be a Divine Person, and the Saviour of the world; embraced his religion, with its humiliating doctrines and holy discipline, made a sacrifice of ease, and honour, and life, in his service, and trusted in the promises of one whom they had never seen, for a recompense in the world to come? The apostles had no personal authority to overcome those whom they addressed; no learning to mislead, or eloquence to persuade them; no rewards to tempt their cupidity; no punishments to inflict on the incredulous. As men, they were contemptible in the eyes of the world; and the doctrine which they taught had no charms which might atone for the defects of the publishers. It is unnecessary to speak of their success, because it is universally acknowledged. They effected a mighty revolution in the state of human affairs, and established a religion which superceded all the ancient systems, and has been professed, for seventeen centuries, by all the enlightened nations of the earth. Every effect must have an adequate cause. The first missionaries of Christianity possessed no natural means of insuring its reception; they must, therefore, have been assisted by supernatural power. Unless they had been able to bring forward to view a higher authority than their own, the world would not have listened to them.

Now, the only way in which this could be done, was by the performance of such miracles as are ascribed to them in the New Testament; works evidently exceeding human ability, and wrought by the immediate interposition of Heaven. If a man should come and publish a new religion, and at the same time should give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and the use of their limbs to the lame, and life to the dead, we should be authorised to conclude that it was not an invention of his own, but was a revelation from the Lord of Nature, who alone could controul its laws. The apostles were invested with the power of working miracles. Their Master had therefore risen from the dead, for they performed the miracles in his name, or referred to him as their author; and, consequently, he was alive, and had supernatural gifts at his disposal.

It is astonishing that any person who saw diseases cured, and demons dispossessed, by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, should have refused to give credit to the report of his resurrection. Yet we know that there were men so obstinate in unbelief; and there is proof in the Scriptures, that the evidence of miracles is not irresistible. We must therefore proceed a step farther in accounting for the success of the disciples, in prevailing upon mankind to believe in their crucified Master. We must acknowledge an exertion of Divine power, in working internal as well as external miracles; in subduing their prejudices, fixing their attention seriously upon the subject, and disposing them to give their assent to the fact, notwithstanding the painful sacrifices which their conversion might require. We are thus presented with a new proof of the resurrection of Christ. If he had been in the state of the dead, he could have employed no power in favour of his religion. He could not have sent the Spirit, "to convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."* The general success of the gospel, which, extending beyond the limits of Judea, established itself throughout the Roman empire, and among nations which never submitted to its sway, and its effects in our own age, upon individuals whom it sanctifies, and inspires with peace and hope of immortality, furnish satisfactory evidence that the apostles spake the words of truth and soberness, when they confidently affirmed that their Lord, having been crucified and buried, rose again on the third day, and showed himself alive by many infallible proofs. "We are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to those who obey him."† It has been said, that if Christ really rose from the dead, he should have shown himself to the priests and rulers of the Jews, that they might be convinced, and become witnesses of the fact. Their testimony, it is insinuated, would have had much greater weight than that of his disciples, being the testimony of enemies. This objection is not worthy of much attention. It is a demand for a degree of evidence which has not been given, and it would be of force only if the evidence which has been given were defective. But if it is sufficient, it is plain that the demand is capricious and unreasonable, and, consequently, that its being withheld affords no ground of suspicion or complaint, and will not excuse the unbelief of those who deny this fundamental article of our holy religion.

Had Jesus appeared to the priests and rulers of the Jews, they would either have acknowledged him to be the messiah, or they would have persisted in rejecting him. If they had not believed in him, the evidence, instead of being strengthened, would have been weakened; for it would then have been triumphantly said, although a few obscure and illiterate persons had been deceived by the artifice of his followers, others were more sagacious, had examined the matter with greater care, and had discovered it to be an imposture. We should have been told by infidels, that the pretended resurrection was a trick of the disciples; that it was a different person whom they endeavoured to pass off as their Master returned from the grave; and that the cheat had been found out by the great men of Judea, whom they would have adorned with the high-sounding titles of learned, prudent, and intelligent. It is obvious that, although their unbelief might not have entirely invali-

* John xx. 27.

* John xvi. 8. † Acts v. 32.

dated the evidence, it would have encumbered it with difficulties, which might have greatly disquieted our minds. If, on the other hand, they had believed in Christ, it does not follow that the evidence would have acquired additional strength. Consider how, upon this supposition, the matter would have stood. Instead of a few witnesses, we should have had many; the whole Jewish nation, or the greater part of it, instead of five hundred disciples. But the value of the testimony is to be estimated by the character, not by the number of the witnesses. At present, we have a competent number of persons, who delivered their testimony in such circumstances as afford security for its truth; in the presence of enemies, who possessed the means of detection, if there was any fraud, and in the face of the most formidable opposition, and who sealed it with their blood. If the whole Jewish nation had been converted, we should have been deprived of these proofs of veracity. There would have been no trial of the witnesses, no conflict of opinion, no parties to watch each other's proceedings; the voice of the nation would have been unanimous; but for this reason it would not have been so convincing, because it might have been alleged, and infidels would not have failed to bring forward the objection, that it was a contrivance of the Jews, who were ready to give credit to any story which seemed to realise their hopes of the messiah. We should have heard them loaded with abuse, as an illiterate, credulous, superstitious people, whose testimony was utterly unworthy of attention. The story, it would have been said, was promulgated where it was sure to be received, and no person had power or inclination to detect it. You will all agree with me, I trust, that the evidence, as it stands, is more conclusive than it would have been if the proposal of infidels had been complied with. I shall only add, that it is not made by them from a wish that Jesus had appeared to his enemies, and thus furnished irresistible demonstration of the truth of his religion, but with a design to prove that this want destroys all the other evidence, and that the story of the resurrection is a fable.

There is an objection against the resurrection of our Saviour, founded on the narrative of the Evangelist John, which, however, is hardly worthy of notice, and may be speedily dismissed. He relates that, on two occasions when the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst of the disciples.* As one solid substance cannot pass through another solid substance without dividing it, either what John relates did not happen, and consequently the narrative is false, or Christ did not appear in a real body, and it was only a phantom which the disciples saw. The simple answer to this trifling objection is, that, although the evangelist plainly signifies that he entered in a miraculous manner, he does not determine the nature of the miracle. The doors were shut, and no doubt locked, for fear of the Jews; but Jesus might have opened them without being perceived. It is childish to cavil at a circumstance which can be so easily explained, especially as all the other facts of the narrative clearly show that the disciples believed that he was appearing in a true body, and that they fully ascertained the fact during their personal intercourse with him.

The resurrection of Christ vindicated his character from the aspersions of his enemies. It demonstrated, at the same time, that he had accomplished the work which his Father appointed him to perform, and had obtained eternal redemption for his people. It gives an assurance to those who believe in him, of a future triumph over death and the grave. He rose as their representative, and they shall also rise after his example, and through his merits and power. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."* We cannot more properly conclude this lecture than with the following words:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."†

* John xx. 19, 26.

LECTURE LXII.

CHRIST'S STATE OF EXALTATION.

Ascension of Christ; its Time; the Nature in which, and the Place to which, he ascended; its Witnesses, and his Attendants.—His Seat in Heaven, at "God's Right Hand."—Opinions respecting this Phrase.—It implies the possession of supreme Honour, Felicity, and Power.

Jesus Christ having finished the work assigned to him by his Father, it was not necessary that he should prolong his stay upon earth. It was rather necessary that he should leave it in order to perform those benevolent offices by which the benefits of his humiliation and death would be communicated to his followers; and, in particular, to make way for the coming of another Divine Person, not in a visible form, but in a powerful dispensation of light and holiness, and consolation. "But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."‡ Accordingly, we read, that after he had given all necessary instructions to his disciples, he led them forth to Bethany, where he was parted from them, and received up into heaven.

First, The ascension took place forty days after his resurrection. "To the apostles," Luke says, "he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven."‖ During this interval, he denied himself the full possession of his glorious reward, for the benefit of his disciples, and of the world, to whom they were to minister. The instruction which he imparted to them, they greatly needed, and it was adapted to their present circumstances. From the opportunities which they enjoyed of hearing his public discourses, and conversing with him in private, they had undoubtedly derived much advantage; but their progress was not such as it ought to have been. In consequence of the influence of the national prejudices upon their minds, although they were forewarned of his death, it came upon them by surprise and almost drove them to despair; so inconsistent was it with their preconceived notions of the character and work of the Messiah. It was necessary, therefore, to rectify their misconceptions, and to show them that his sufferings were an essential part of the plan which he had undertaken to execute; and that, although nothing was less expected by them, they had been expressly announced by the prophets. That he was thus em-

* 1 Cor. xv. 20—23. †1 Pet. i. 3—5. ‡ John xvi. 5—7. ‖ Acts i. 3.

ployed in the interval between his resurrection and ascension, we are informed by the evangelists: "He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."* This exposition of the Scriptures was calculated to give relief to their minds, which, although comforted by the return of their Master from the grave, must have been perplexed and confounded by the unexpected events which had befallen him. For this reason it was now given; but their full instruction in the nature of his kingdom, or of the new dispensation which he designed to establish, was deferred to the day of Pentecost, when, according to his promise, he sent the Spirit to lead them into all the truth. This was not the only reason why our Lord did not immediately return to heaven. He continued upon earth, to give his disciples a full opportunity to be assured of the truth of his resurrection, as they were to be the witnesses of it to the world. To qualify them for this office, it was necessary that he should not merely pay them a transient visit, lest unbelievers should have said, that they were deceived by the force of imagination; but that he should appear so often, and in such circumstances, as not to leave the slightest ground for suspicion or cavil. Accordingly, he showed himself not once only, but many times; not to separate individuals alone, but to several in company, and, on one occasion, to more than five hundred persons; he conversed with them, allowed them to touch him, ate and drank with them. In any ordinary case, the evidence would have been deemed sufficient, even by the most sceptical, to establish the most important fact. So far therefore, as respects their opportunities of being acquainted with this fact, the testimony of the apostles cannot be reasonably called in question. They could all say, with the beloved disciple, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us."†

Secondly, Our Lord ascended in human nature. The man Christ Jesus has left the earth, and entered into that invisible region of the universe where God sits on the throne of his Majesty. To his followers, it is a source of high consolation to know, that he has not laid aside their nature, but retains it amidst his glory; because they can look up to him with confidence, in the full assurance of his sympathy, and see, in his exaltation, an earnest of their future glory. But this is not the principal idea to which I request your attention. The point to be considered at present is, that it was solely in human nature that he ascended to heaven; or that, like his death, burial, and resurrection, the ascension can be predicated of him only as a man. As God, he could neither descend nor ascend, because his Divine essence, filling heaven and earth, cannot change its place, and does not admit of that exaltation, or that accession of glory which the ascension implies. It is acknowledged, indeed, that his divine glory, which, during his residence among mortals, had been concealed, was then unveiled, although even this concession requires to be explained, to make it consistent with truth; the obscuration and manifestation of his glory properly referring to his human nature, and to men, not to the inhabitants of heaven, in whose eyes it always shone with undiminished lustre. But because, in a certain sense, it may be said to have been revealed when he ascended, some have maintained, that the ascension may be considered as relative to his divine nature, as well as his human. But, in doing so, they are chargeable, when speaking of a plain fact, with substituting figurative for literal language, and thus confounding two things, which are distinct, and should be carefully separated. The subject of discussion at present is, not a change of state, but a change of place, which was competent to that nature alone, which, being finite, could exist only in a certain portion of space, and might be at one time on earth, and at another in heaven. The words of our Lord are worthy of attention: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven."* There is an apparent confusion and contradiction in this passage; and, had it related to any other person, it might have been pronounced to be unintelligible. Of the Son of man it is said, that he has come down from heaven, and yet was in heaven. To those who are convinced of his divinity, the passage presents no difficulty. His two natures being personally united, that is justly affirmed of the one, which is strictly true only of the other. The existence of his human nature commenced upon earth, and it had never been in heaven; for the opinion of the elder Socinians, that he was taken up to it before he entered upon his ministry, to be instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, is a dream, or a dishonest figment, devised with a view to evade the evidence, arising from this and other passages, of his pre-existence and divinity; but he had come down from it, by the manifestation of himself in human flesh, yet was still in it, by the immensity of his essence. Of a literal change of place, as God, he was incapable; it was in his assumed nature, that he who had first descended, afterwards ascended, "that he might fill all things," heaven with his glory, and the earth with the blessings of his grace.

Thirdly, The place to which he ascended was heaven, as the Scriptures declare, in many passages. One apostle affirms, that he ascended "above all heavens;" but his meaning is ascertained by a reference to the prevailing opinion of his age. According to the system of the Jews, there were three heavens;—the aerial heaven, which is the region of clouds and meteors; the starry heaven, in which the celestial luminaries are fixed; and the heaven of heavens, in which the throne of God is erected. Our Redeemer ascended above the two former, or the visible heavens, and entered into the latter, which is concealed from mortal eyes by an impenetrable veil. Where the highest heaven is seated we cannot tell; but, agreeably to an idea which seems to be natural because it is common, it is said to be above us; and hence his passage to it from this world is called an ascent. It is the place in which the glory of God, which is partially seen in his works, is fully revealed, angels and the departed spirits of the just at present reside, and the redeemed, after the resurrection, will have their everlasting habitation.

Heaven may be considered under the two different notions of a palace and a temple. In the one view it is the seat of power and majesty, in the other it is the place of solemn worship. Into heaven, considered as a palace, Jesus entered in the character of a king, who, having vanquished his enemies, and established his title to the crown, went to take possession of his kingdom. To this event the following passage is applicable, although, in the first instance, it may be understood to have referred to the entrance of the ark into the tabernacle: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in

* Luke xxiv. 44—46. † 1 John i. 1—3.

* John iii. 13.

battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."* Into heaven considered as a temple, he entered in the character of a priest; and his ascension was prefigured by the entrance of Aaron, and his successors in office, into the most holy place, to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifices, and to burn incense before the mercy-seat. The first and fundamental duty of the priesthood he performed upon earth, by offering that immaculate and invaluable sacrifice, which appeased divine justice, and obtained eternal redemption for his people; it remained to plead the merits of his death, and obtain, by his intercession, the blessings for which he had paid the price of his blood. For this purpose he ascended, as we are informed by an apostle in the following words: "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."†

Fourthly, The witnesses of his ascension were his disciples, whom he had assembled for this purpose. We are not informed, how many of them were together at this time. On one occasion he was seen by more than five hundred brethren; but whether it was at his ascension, or when he met with his followers in Galilee, we cannot certainly say. But although we should suppose, what, however, is not very probable, that none were present but the twelve apostles, the number was more than sufficient to attest the fact. They were witnesses qualified in every respect; and as their testimony would be readily received by the other disciples, who had full confidence in their veracity, so it is entitled to credit among all other men, confirmed as it is by miracles, which they performed by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, whom their master promised to give them after his ascension, and whom he did actually send on the day of Pentecost. Jesus did not withdraw secretly from our world, lest it should have been said by unbelievers, that we know not what is become of him, and there is no reason why we should take any farther concern in him. As his entrance, although obscure in respect of his parentage, and the place where he first saw the light, was illustrated by a vision of angels, who proclaimed it to the shepherds of Bethlehem; so his departure, although unknown to the great men of Jerusalem, and the inhabitants in general, was an object of attention to his chosen friends. It might have been afterwards revealed to them by the Spirit, who instructed them in many other secret things; but the importance of the fact required, that it should take place in such a manner as to be attested by ocular witnesses. It appears that he was not carried away by a sudden rapture, but slowly rose from the earth, and that the disciples had leisure to follow him with their eyes, till he had ascended to a considerable height, when a cloud received him out of their sight, or intervened between him and the earth. Their wistful looks were fixed upon the spot, where they had caught the last glimpse of their beloved Master; and they would have stood in the same posture, till night had enveloped the heavens in its shade, in the vain expectation of seeing him again, had not two angels appeared to them and said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."‡

The place from which he ascended was the Mount of Olives, and in the vicinity of Bethany. Gethsemane was also on the Mount of Olives. On this coincidence it has been remarked, that the place was chosen, that as he had there given a proof of human weakness, while he endured the wrath of his Father, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground, so he might there, by rising to heaven, display the power and glory of his divinity; that his exaltation might commence on the same spot where he had been in the lowest state of abasement and sorrow; and that from the scene in which he had struggled with the powers of darkness, he might soar above principalities and powers. And hence, it has been said, we should learn that we are not to expect a triumph, till we have encountered the toils and perils of the contest, and that we should not despair of obtaining the kingdom when our warfare is accomplished. These are pious reflections; but their solidity depends upon the fact, that he ascended from the very spot which had witnessed his agony. Of this, however, we have no certainty. The Mount of Olives was of some extent; and for aught that we can tell, the place of the ascension might be at a considerable distance from Gethsemane. If this should be the truth, the reflections founded on the presumed identity of the places, however good in themselves, must be classed with many other suggestions of fancy.

Our Lord was attended at his ascension by the glorious inhabitants of heaven. Only two of them, according to the Scriptures, were seen; but we have reason to believe, that thousands were present, although invisible to human eyes: "The chariots of God," says the Psalmist, "are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."* They were present not like the Roman soldiers, who followed their victorious general as having a share in his triumph, because by their valour his battles had been won; but, to add to the splendour of the scene, and to celebrate his mighty achievements. The thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers of heaven, were put in subjection to him: and they came, on this occasion, to do homage to their Lord, and to swell his train when he took possession of his kingdom.

His leading captivity captive when he ascended, denotes his triumph over the infernal powers. They who had made men captives by their successful stratagems, saw the spoils wrested from their hands, and were themselves made captives by our Almighty Redeemer. Whether they were compelled to be present, and were exhibited as vanquished foes, disgraced and ruined, and reserved to everlasting punishment, we are not warranted by a single expression, of which no explanation is given, to affirm. There is no doubt that our Saviour triumphed over them while he ascended; that in his exaltation to the throne of heaven, they beheld a fearful presage of the final overthrow of their kingdom.

Let us now proceed to consider what followed the ascension of Christ: "So then," says the Evangelist Mark, "after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."†

Every person is sensible that this language is figurative. Neither the right hand of God, nor the posture ascribed to our Saviour, can be literally understood. God is a pure Spirit, and has no bodily members. The Scriptures expressly forbid us to make any visible representations of him, because they must be false and degrading; and the Israelites were particularly reminded, that, in the day God spoke to their fathers, they saw no similitude. When mention, therefore, is made of the eyes, the ears, the feet, and the hands of God, it is evident that we ought to explain them in consistency with

* Ps. xxiv. 7—10. † Heb. ix. 24. ‡ Acts i. 11.

* Ps. lxviii. 17, 18. † Mark xvi. 19.

the spirituality of his essence, and to consider them as metaphors, employed to assist us in conceiving his perfections and operations. Hence, although our Redeemer in his state of exaltation, has a material body, which is capable of corporeal actions and postures, it requires little reflection to perceive that "his sitting" is figurative, as well as "the right hand," at which he is said to sit. We are as ignorant of the nature and employments of glorified bodies, as we are of the nature and employments of spirits. Besides, the Scriptures are not uniform with respect to the posture which they assign to our Redeemer; for as at one time he is said to sit, he is at another said to stand, at the right hand of God. We are, therefore, under the necessity of supposing, that their design is not to fix our attention upon the posture itself, but upon the state of which it is expressive. Instead, then, of inquiring separately, what is meant by the right hand of God, and what by sitting at it, I shall consider them conjunctly, and point out their united import.

Before I proceed, however, I shall make a remark or two upon the other posture which is sometimes assigned to him. When the blessed martyr Stephen was surrounded by his infuriated enemies, being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw Jesus "standing at the right hand of God."* If you bear in mind that it is not the posture, but the state, which, in both cases, should be considered, you will perceive that the different representations are not contradictory. Sitting is the posture of a sovereign, or a judge, or a person who has finished his labours, and is enjoying ease; standing is the posture of a man who waits to receive a friend, or is prepared to defend him. On the present occasion, when a holy man was undergoing a dreadful trial of his faith, Jesus rose, if we may speak so, from his throne to send to him the necessary succours of his grace, to meet and welcome his spirit as soon as it should escape from its persecutors, and to introduce him into the presence of his Father, that he might receive from his hand the recompense of an unfading crown. To Stephen the sight was consoling. It sustained his courage amidst the terrors of a violent death, and enabled him to resign his mortal life in the joyful hope of a better: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Having subjoined another petition for his murderers, "he fell asleep."

There is scarcely a doctrine or fact in Scripture, which folly or malignity has not perverted, when it happened to stand in the way of some favourite opinion. The sitting of Christ at the right hand of God, instead of being considered as expressive of his exaltation, has been converted into a proof of his inferiority to the Father, because the left hand was the place of honour, as the abettors of this notion endeavour to show by quotations from ancient writers. It might be said to such men, that, as our Saviour ascended to heaven in the character of mediator, nothing is gained by proving his inferiority to the Father in that character; for we readily acknowledge it, but at the same time maintain, that it is not inconsistent with his essential equality. But the argument on which they found their conclusion is false. Whatever may have been the practice of some other nations, as the Scriptures were written by Jews, and addressed to them in the first instance, it is by their usages that we must explain this expression, and others of a similar nature. Now, among them the right hand was the place of honour. "The man of God's right hand,"† is the man whom God delights to honour. "A wise man's heart" is said to be "at his right hand," because he engages in honourable pursuits; but "a fool's heart" to be "at his left" hand, because he acts imprudently and shamefully.‡ When Joseph presented his two sons to his father, he set the elder on his right hand and the younger on his left; but Jacob, to show his preference of the younger, laid his right hand on his head.* Nothing is more decisive of the point, than the order in which men will be arranged on the day of judgment, when "some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt;" for then the judge will set the former on his right hand, and the latter on his left. Enough has been said to expose this abortive attempt to wrest the expression which we are now considering, to serve the purposes of a party.†

There is another opinion still more strange, that Christ's sitting at the right hand of God, denotes that, in a certain sense, he is higher than the Father. It is so extravagant, and in fact so unintelligible, that it would be a waste of time to attempt to refute it. He is superior, it is said, to the Father, not in reality, but in the administration of his kingdom. It is sufficient to oppose to this impious assertion the words of an apostle; "The Father hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him."‡

The right hand is the place of honour. It is so esteemed among us, and was so accounted by the Jews. When Solomon's mother came to him, "he sat down upon his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand."‖ It is implied, therefore, in the position assigned to our Saviour in heaven, that he is invested with great dignity and glory. I showed, in the former part of this Lecture, that the ascension related solely to his human nature, because his Divine was incapable of change of place, being always in heaven as well as upon earth. I now observe, that it was equally incapable of any accession of glory, because it was already infinitely glorious, in the possession of all possible perfection. But its glory was veiled during his humiliation, and only a few rays of it were seen in the miraculous works which he performed, and the sublime doctrines which he published. As the sun, having scattered the clouds which covered his face, pours his bright effulgence upon the earth, so our Redeemer, upon his exaltation to heaven, appeared in all the majesty of his character, and showed to all its blessed inhabitants, that the Son of man is also the Son of God, and the equal of the Father. To this manifestation of his original dignity, after the temporary obscuration which it had suffered, these words of his intercessory prayer may be referred: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thy own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."§

But there was honour conferred upon our Saviour in human nature, and in the character of Mediator; and to this there is a particular reference, when he is said to be seated at the right hand of God. It is elevated above men and angels; it is the highest of the works of God. Even in its state of humiliation, its powers surpassed those of the most richly gifted creature; no wisdom, for example, equal to that which he displayed, being found among the inhabitants of heaven; and now, we may presume, its faculties are expanded to the utmost limit of which they are susceptible. Of the external glory of his human nature, we can form no idea, because we have received no information on the subject; but this we may venture to say, that in him is displayed the perfection of majesty and beauty. His appearance to John, in the isle of Patmos, was awful and majestic, but, partly at least, symbolical, like the visions of the prophets. On the mount of transfiguration, his countenance shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. Without entering into particulars, the Scriptures declare that his body

* Acts vii. 55. † Ps. lxxx. 17. ‡ Ecc. x. 2.

* Gen. xlviii. 14.
† Vide Witsius, in Symb. Apost. Exer. xxi. § 5.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 27. ‖ 1 Kings ii. 19. § John xvii. 5.

is glorious, and is the pattern according to which the bodies of the saints will be fashioned. It is not inconsistent with the ascription of transcendent honour to him, that he promises to give his saints to sit down with him upon his throne. They will share in his glory, but not in equal measure; their glory will be similar, but not in the same degree. He is "the first-born among many brethren;"* entitled to a double portion; the heir and the lord of the family. Hence, notwithstanding their elevation, they will acknowledge him as their superior, and do him homage. While the angels adore him, the saints will cast down their crowns before his throne, and both will join in expressions of admiration, and gratitude, and praise. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."† It is unnecessary to refer to a distinction formerly made, and to remark, that he is not the object of worship as man, nor properly as Mediator; because, as he is in this character the servant of the Father, so it is by him that our prayers and praises are presented. It is enough to know, that it is the incarnate God who is worshipped by the heavenly congregation, and that, although the foundation of this worship is the divine perfections of which he is possessed, the great motive to it is his redeeming love, and it is addressed to him without distinction of natures. "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour."‡

But this is not the only idea suggested by his sitting at the right hand of God. It imports the possession of happiness; but whether this idea is founded, as some suppose, on the fact that gifts are usually conferred by the right hand, or is derived from some other source, it is not material to inquire. That the expression admits of this sense, is evident from the following passage: "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."‖ It is to be particularly noticed, that these words are spoken by the Messiah, and with a view to his exaltation. They follow the declaration of his confident hope, that God "would not leave his soul in hell, nor suffer him to see corruption, but would show him the path of life," or raise him from the grave.

For the joy which was set before him he endured the cross, and despised the shame; and he has now entered into it. Sitting at the right hand of God, he is nearer to him than any man or angel; and his nearness implies not only a closer relation, resulting from the union of his human nature to the divine, but also more intimate fellowship. The presence of God is a source of felicity. The place which we call heaven, would not be happier than the most desolate spot upon earth, if he did not there impart the fulness of his love; and a day in the sanctuary would not be preferable to a day of bodily rest at home, were it not the chosen scene on which he displays the wonders of his grace. The light of his countenance awakens emotions of joy in the souls of the righteous, with which the most intense sensations of worldly pleasure are not to be compared. If the meanest saint is destined to enjoy a degree of felicity which it has not entered into the human mind to conceive, what must be the communication of divine love to him, who is nearer to God than all the saints, is the object of his infinite approbation and delight, and has glorified him in the highest in the work of redemption! What shall be done to the man whom he delights to honour? The reward is proportioned to his merit, the height of his joy may be estimated by the depth of his previous sorrow. "The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness; thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation; honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever; thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance."§ While he partakes of all the pleasures which are at the right hand of God, he rejoices to reflect that his great undertaking is accomplished, to behold around him the fruits of his labours, and to know that in due time heaven will be filled with millions of the redeemed, who will for ever praise him as the author of their happiness. "He sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied."¶

Again, the right hand is an emblem of power. This is the general idea which is suggested, when hands and arms are attributed to God, because it is with our arms and hands that we exert our strength. The right hand is most commonly used, and whatever cause may be assigned for this curious fact, is a more powerful instrument than the left hand. The sitting of our Saviour at the right hand of God, signifies on this account that he is exalted to authority and dominion. "Hereafter," he said to the Jewish council, "shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power."‡

The Psalmist refers to the power of the Messiah in his state of exaltation in these words: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."‖ It was exhibited to Daniel in the night visions, when "he saw, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."§ Our Saviour announced it to his disciples after his resurrection: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;"¶ and Paul speaks thus of it in his epistle to the Philippians: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."** There is a distinction to be observed between his essential and his mediatorial kingdom. The former he always possessed, and since it belonged to him as God the Creator of all things, he could not lay it aside even during his humiliation. The latter he received when he ascended; for although he had a right to it, when he rose from the dead, and therefore told his disciples, that it was already given to him, it was upon his entrance into heaven, that he sat down upon his throne. His mediatorial kingdom comprehends power to establish, and govern, and defend, and bestow eternal salvation upon his church, and power to render all other things subservient to its interests. He ought to be considered not only as the King of Zion, but as the Lord of the Universe. Hence, when we say that the world is under the government of God, we should reflect, that properly it is not the Father of whom we speak, except in this sense, that he always acts in concurrence with the Son; but that the declaration of our Saviour, that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the

* Rom. viii. 29. † Rev. v. 11, 12. ‡ Heb. ii. 9. ‖ Ps. xvi. 11.

* Ps. xxi. 1—6. † Is. liii. 11. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 64. ‖ Ps. cx. 1. § Dan. vii. 13, 14. ¶ Matt. xxviii. 18. ** Phil. ii. 9—11.

Son,"* is true of the whole administration of affairs. Our Redeemer holds the sceptre, and sways it over angels and men. He hath put all things under his feet.

There is one other idea connected with his sitting at the right hand of God, which it may be proper to mention, as it is suggested by the following contrast between him and the priests of the law: "Every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool."† The posture of the legal priests imported that they were constantly engaged in the service of the altar, and, consequently, had not accomplished the design of their office, by the perfect reconciliation of the people to God. The high priest never sat down in the most holy place, but having stood for some time before the mercy-seat, he retired to offer new sacrifices, and again to go the round of the sacred offices. But Jesus Christ, when he entered into heaven, sat down at the right hand of God, and is "a priest upon his throne." His posture signifies that his work is finished. His one oblation has satisfied the demands of justice, and his Father has testified his approbation of it, by conferring upon him honour and authority.

The present exaltation of Jesus Christ is a source of great consolation to his followers. It was not solely for his personal glory that he ascended, but a so for the good of his people, in promoting which he employs all the interest and power which he possesses. His intercession insures the acceptance of their duties, not as the condition of salvation, but as testimonies of their love to God, and their filial subjection to him. His government is calculated to tranquillize and comfort their minds amidst the vicissitudes of life. As they are assured that nothing can happen to themselves without his appointment, and that every word will be overruled for their final welfare, so they may look upon all the dangers in the world, as under the control of his power, and the direction of his wisdom, as constituting parts of his plan, working for ends worthy of him, and subservient to the establishment of his kingdom. Affairs may not proceed in a train agreeable to our views and expectations; but it will repress every murmur and every wish for a different order, to reflect that he presides over them, who is the patron of truth and righteousness, and the faithful guardian of those who love him: "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."‡

The security of the church depends upon the exercise of the power with which Christ was invested at his ascension. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it, because it is defended by his omnipotent arm. It has been deemed a proof of Cæsar's greatness of mind, although, in truth, it proved nothing but his presumption and impiety, that he said to the sailors in a storm, "Fear not, this ship carries Cæsar;" as if the elements would have done homage to that ambitious spirit. The wind and waves did indeed respect him on that occasion, but only as they have since respected, and will always respect, the meanest and most worthless of mankind, whose hour is not come. The ocean will not swallow up those who are doomed to perish by the sword. But the church may assume the attitude and the language of confidence and defiance when she is menaced by the powers of earth and hell, because He is her protector, who can render their councils and efforts abortive, and scatter them with his breath: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."*

To him who is exalted above principalities and powers, profound reverence and prompt obedience are due. This is the command of the church: "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." We are under law to Jesus Christ; and as our consciences should recognise his authority, and bow to it, so it will render our obedience the homage of the heart, devoutly to remember, that his right to demand it is founded on the deep humiliation and exquisite sufferings to which he submitted for our salvation. Although we have not seen his glory with our eyes, as the beloved disciple did in the isle of Patmos, yet, being admitted to contemplate it through the medium of revelation, which gives such descriptions of it as are fitted to excite mingled emotions of reverence and confidence, let us, like him, fall at his feet, and say with another saint, "Truly, we are thy servants; we are thy servants, thou hast loosed our bonds: we will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord."†

* John v. 22. † Heb. x. 11—13. ‡ Ps. xcvii. 1.

LECTURE LXIII.

CHRIST'S STATE OF EXALTATION.

The General Judgment, a Doctrine of Revelation—The Time and Duration of it—The Place of Judgment—The Parties—Christ the Judge: his Fitness for the Office—Circumstances of his appearing—Standards of Judgment—The Sentences, and their Execution.

Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."‡ These were the words of the two angels who appeared on Mount Olivet to the disciples, while they were wistfully looking after their Lord, who had ascended in their sight, and was now concealed by a cloud. He will come again at the appointed time; and it will be the purpose of his coming to close the administration which he is at present carrying on at the right hand of his Father, by the public distribution of rewards and punishments. To this consummating act of his royal authority, I shall, in this lecture, direct your attention.

In treating this subject, it is usual to bring forward arguments suggested by reason, in support of the declarations of Scripture respecting the future judgment of the human race. Were we to deny that justice is essential to the Supreme Governor of the universe, we should divest him of all moral excellence, and leave only those physical attributes which distinguish him from men, as almighty power, perpetual duration, and immensity of essence. We should transform him, whom even the heathens called Optimus Maximus, into the Arimanes of the Persians, a being of malignant dispositions, the author of darkness and confusion, and every evil work. But we find that, at present, justice is only partially exercised, and the common course of things is conducted without any marked regard to the character and actions of men. Those whom we call good, because their actions are conformable to moral distinctions, are often left to struggle with poverty, and to pine in affliction; while bold transgressors, men who set their mouths against the heavens, and give loose reins to their appetites and passions, not seldom enjoy outward peace, and pass their days amidst affluence, and a succession of de-

* Ps. xlvi. 1, 2. † Ps. cxvi. 16, 17. ‡ Acts i. 11.

lights. The exceptions serve the more clearly to illustrate the imperfection of the present system; to show us more distinctly what, in our apprehension, might be, and ought to be: and call more loudly for a different order of things. Human laws, which, in so far as they are just, may be considered as making a part of the moral administration of the universe, because they are sanctioned by Heaven, supply this defect in part, but only in part. Besides that, in general, they afford no reward to the obedient, but simple protection, there are innumerable cases of delinquency which they cannot reach, in consequence of the limited knowledge and power of those who execute them, and of other causes which obstruct the exercise of authority. Many crimes are secret, unknown to all but the guilty; and, of public crimes, the authors are not always discovered, or they escape from justice by flight, or they set it at defiance; or, what is worst of all, they find means to prevent it by bribery and perjury. What then is the result of this view of the state of human affairs? Shall we conclude, in opposition to the clear dictates of reason, and the consent of all nations, that there is no God? Or shall we say, with some impious philosophers, that he is regardless of the actions of men; and that, instead of a wise and righteous Providence, blind fortune presides? Or rather, compelled by the best sentiments of our minds, which recognise a Deity, and invest him with every moral perfection, shall we not rest in this obvious inference, that, since justice is not at present fully displayed, another dispensation will follow, under which there will be an exact retribution; that a time will come when the wrongs of the injured shall be redressed, when the proud transgressors shall stoop to a superior power, when every work shall be brought into judgment, and every secret thing shall be revealed?

To this reasoning no person of candour will object, so far as it goes to prove a future retribution. If there is a just God, it must ultimately be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. Accordingly, a recompense in another state was expected by those who did not enjoy the benefit of Divine revelation, and the expectation was founded partly upon traditional authority, and partly also upon argument. They believed, that, when the souls of men left their bodies, they appeared before certain judges appointed to take cognizance of human actions, Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Æacus, who, after an impartial investigation, pronounced sentence upon them, and consigned them to the fields of bliss, or to the region of torment. But the judgment which the Gentiles anticipated at the close of their mortal course, was individual and private, like the sentence which Christians believe will be pronounced upon every man immediately after his death; and this is all that the reasoning proves. Divines, therefore, are chargeable with inaccuracy, when they employ it in support of the doctrine now under consideration, since it serves only to establish the fact, that men will be recompensed, not that they will be recompensed by a procedure carried on in the presence of assembled generations. Having convinced ourselves that God will render to every man according to his works, we can advance no farther by the light of reason than the heathens did, who held that men appeared individually before the infernal judges, or at most along with those who happened to arrive in the other world at the same time, and, that they were dismissed, without any farther solemnity, each to his proper place.

It is to revelation alone that we are indebted for the knowledge of a general judgment, in which the proceedings will take place in the sight of angels and men; the righteous and the wicked will be arranged in separate classes, and all will be witnesses of the Divine justice in the reward of the good, and the punishment of the bad. I shall content myself with a few passages in which it is announced. "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead."* "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."† "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."‡

It may be thought that the ends of justice are answered when individuals are treated according to their desert, and as this is done immediately after death, that no further procedure is necessary. Justice, as it respects private persons, consists in regulating their conduct by its dictates, in their transactions with friends, neighbours, and mankind in general; and if they uniformly preserve inviolate the rights of others, all its demands are fulfilled. But the justice of a governor belongs to the public, who claim not only that it should impartially execute the laws, but that it should be exercised in such a manner as is most conducive to the general interests. The rewards to which meritorious individuals are entitled ought not to be conferred, and the punishment which transgressors have incurred ought not to be inflicted, in silence and secrecy, but both should be openly dispensed for the honour of the governor's character, and the advantage which will redound to the community from the salutary influence of example. As God is the governor of the world, it is not sufficient that he is just, unless he also appear to be just. The retribution which takes place after death is unknown. We see men of different characters die; but we cannot trace the flight of their souls into the invisible world, nor hear the sentence pronounced from the tribunal before which they appear; and our conjectures upon the subject may often be very far from the truth. Hence a general judgment, at which all the descendants of Adam will be present, seems necessary to the display of the justice of God, to such a manifestation of it as will vindicate his government from all the charges which impiety has brought against it, satisfy all doubts, and leave a conviction in the minds of all intelligent creatures, that he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. It is expedient that at the winding up of the scheme, all its parts should be seen to be worthy of Him by whom it was arranged and conducted. In this way, those who have witnessed, with many disquieting thoughts, the irregularity and disorder in the present system, will have ocular evidence that there never was the slightest deviation from the principles of equity, and that the cause of perplexity, was the delay of their full operation. They will see the good and the bad no longer mingled together, and apparently treated alike, but separated into two classes, the one on the right hand of the Judge, and the other on his left, and distinguished as much at least by their respective sentences, as by the places which they occupy. We perceive, then, the reason that the judgment passed upon each individual at the termination of his life, will be solemnly ratified at the end of the world. There may be another reason for the public exercise of justice in the final allotment of the human race. It may be intended to be a spectacle to the universe; it may be an act of the divine administration, which will extend its influence to all the provinces of his empire. We are sure that angels will witness

* Acts xvii. 31. † 2 Cor. v. 10. ‡ Matt. xxv. 31, 32.

it; and if there are other orders of rational creatures, it may be a solemn lesson to them, by which they will be confirmed in fidelity to their Creator, and filled with more profound veneration of his infinite excellences.

The time of the general judgment is a secret which God has reserved to himself. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven."* An opinion seems to have been entertained by some persons in the primitive church, that the awful event was not distant; but only the lying lips of such a man as Gibbon could dare to say "that its near approach had been predicted by the apostles; the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples: and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ himself, were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished, which had beheld his humble condition upon earth."† The prophecy of our Saviour to which he refers, evidently relates to the destruction of Jerusalem, and is interspersed with several circumstances which clearly prove, that, although the style is bold and highly figurative, it is a local calamity which is announced, a desolation beyond the limits of which it was possible to escape, an event which would be followed by other events in a long succession; in a word, that the prophecy does *not* foretell the end of the world. It is so far from being true that its near approach was predicted by the apostles, that, when the notion began to prevail, they set themselves to oppose it, as we learn from the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, in which Paul beseeches them in the most solemn terms, not to be shaken in mind or troubled, as if the day of Christ were at hand, and proceeds to inform them of other events which would precede it, and consequently proved that it was still remote. It is commonly said that the design of keeping it secret, is to excite us to watch and to be always prepared. This is the improvement which we should make of the fact that there is a future judgment; but it will not seem to an accurate thinker to arise properly from the uncertainty of the time, because amidst our total ignorance of the day and the hour, we are assured, as men in past generations might have been, that it will not take place during our lives. There is a long series of prophecies which will be fulfilled before the coming of Christ, and by the details of which ages will be consumed. This may be a topic of popular declamation, but it will not bear exact inquiry. Some things in Scripture which are understood to favour the idea, relate to the destruction of Jerusalem. It may operate in this way upon the men who shall live after the prophecies are fulfilled, and who, if they rightly discern the signs of the times, may justly conclude that the end of all things is at hand. In our age, the immediate motive to vigilance and activity, is the uncertainty of the time of our death, which will be precisely the same to us in its effects as the second coming of Christ; for after death is the judgment, when the state of every man will be immutably fixed.

As we have no means of ascertaining the time of the general judgment, so it is impossible to say any thing respecting its duration. It is called a day; but the use of this term in the Scriptures is indefinite, and it marks at one time a shorter, and at another a longer period. There is no doubt that the Judge could in a moment separate the righteous from the wicked, and having then passed sentence upon them, send them immediately away to their respective abodes; but we cannot conceive that this summary process would answer the end of the judgment, which we apprehend to be not simply the reward of the good, and the punishment of the bad, but the display of justice in particular cases. If our notion of a detailed procedure is correct, as the design of it will be to convey just ideas of the divine character to the minds of creatures, whose thoughts follow in a train, a natural day seems to us too short for the disclosure of so many secrets, the correction of so many apparent irregularities, the solution of so many perplexities, the determination of so many cases. But we speculate in ignorance, and it is wiser to rest in the general conclusion, that the business will be so conducted, as to produce in every mind a full conviction of the consummate rectitude of the divine government.

"Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"* This question of the disciples related to our Saviour's prediction of the destruction of the temple, and his answer must be considered as bearing upon that point. It is a great mistake, therefore, to bring forward the circumstances enumerated by him as signs of his second coming, because they were to precede the fall of Jerusalem; and he expressly told his disciples that the generation then existing should not pass away till all these things were fulfilled. We know of no signs but the fulfilment of prophecy. The Gospel will be preached to all nations; antichrist will fall; the Jews will be converted; the millennium will succeed, or the thousand years of his spiritual reign upon earth; and, it should seem, will be followed by a period of impiety, when the wicked will go up on the breadth of the earth, to compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city.† Then the Judge will appear upon his throne; but, in the order of events, the intervals are not marked, and the whole is expressed in such figurative and general terms as to convey no definite information respecting the time. Past prophecies have been gradually, and sometimes insensibly fulfilled. We may, therefore, presume that, although those who shall live towards the end of the world, when the predictions are accomplished, may know that the end of all things is approaching, they will be as incapable as we are of calculating the time; and that, even to them, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, suddenly, and without previous warning.

The place where the judgment will be held is this world; and as it is said that the saints shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, it should seem that the wicked will be left standing upon the earth. What region of it will be chosen for the last and solemn scene, it would be presumptuous to conjecture. The following passage in Joel has no relation to the subject: "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about."‡ The valley of Jehoshaphat, lying between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, is of small extent; but the scene of the last judgment will afford ample space for the countless millions who will be assembled upon it to hear their final doom. All nations shall be gathered before the Son of man. The judgment, therefore, presupposes the resurrection, of which, however, I shall not at present speak, as it will occur in another part of this course. The whole order of angels was created at once; it has received no increase, and sustained no diminution since its commencement. The human race consisted, at first, of a single pair, from whom successive generations are derived, according to the peculiar law of their nature; and as they were made subject to death in consequence of sin, they have passed along the stage of life, and after a short display, vanished from sight. It is but a small portion of mankind that is alive at any particular period. Multitudes have retired into the land of darkness and oblivion; multitudes will yet be raised up by the creating power of God, to spend their transient day in the light of the sun, and then descend into the shades of death.

When the Son of man shall be revealed in his glory, he will call upon the earth and the sea to give up their

* Matt. xxiv. 36. † Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. xv.

* Matt. xxiv. 3. † Rev. xx. 9. ‡ Joel iii. 12.

dead, and all who ever breathed the breath of life from Adam to his last son, who, like him, returned to the dust, shall arise, and, together with those who are then alive, shall stand in their lot at the end of their days. The men of the present age will be mingled in the same crowd with the antediluvians, and with those who shall be summoned from their dwellings and their occupations by the voice of the archangel. All ranks and conditions will be confounded. Those whom birth, and office, and wealth, and talents placed at a distance from each other, will stand upon the same level; the great without their ensigns of dignity, and the poor without their marks of abasement, for then only moral distinctions will be regarded. The oppressor and the oppressed will be there, the one to obtain the redress of his wrongs, and the other to have his violence returned upon his own head. Statesmen, whose avarice or profusion impoverished nations, and whose intrigues involved them in wars; princes, who imagined that mankind were made for them; and blood-stained heroes, who acquired an illustrious name by desolating the earth, will stand before the tribunal, amidst the cries and execrations of millions whom they ruined with impunity. Jews and Gentiles, Mahometans and Christians, the learned and the unlearned, the bond and the free, the high and the low, will appear divested of all adventitious circumstances, to render an account to Him who is no respecter of persons, and whose omniscient eye will distinguish each individual in the immense throng as easily as if he were alone. Not one of the righteous shall be forgotten, and not one of the wicked shall find a hiding-place from the justice of the Judge.

The Judge is Jesus Christ, as we are informed in the passage formerly quoted. As sustaining this character, he is to be considered, not simply as the second Person of the Trinity, to whom, in common with the other persons, the government of the moral and natural world belongs, but as mediator. His divinity is presupposed, as we shall afterwards see; but, in the final retribution, he will act as the Father's delegate, and exercise official power. For this statement we have his own authority: "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."* The communication of power to him is expressly asserted; and the reason assigned, "because he is the Son of man," imports that it is imparted to him in his mediatorial character to reward his humiliation and sufferings, and to qualify him to accomplish all the ends of his office. Hence he will appear not only in his own glory, but in the glory of his Father, bearing this honourable commission which will exalt him so highly in the eyes of angels and men.

There is a manifest congruity in appointing him, who was the Saviour, to be the judge of the human race. It was fit that the promises which he had made, and the threatenings which he had denounced, should be carried into effect by himself; that, from his hand, those who had submitted to his law should receive their reward, and those who had been disobedient their punishment. It was fit that he should bring to a close the dispensation which he had established by his personal interposition, and should fulfil, in his eternal state, the destinies of those for whom its benefits were intended. Besides, as the judgment is appointed for the public manifestation of the righteousness of the divine government, it was necessary that there should be a visible judge, whose proceedings all should witness, and whose voice all should hear. The proper person, therefore, is Jesus Christ, who, having assumed our nature, will appear in it unchanged in essence, although invested with glory suitable to the dignity of his person and the rank which it holds as the head of the creation of God. On Sinai the Israelites beheld the awful tokens of the divine presence; but they only heard the voice of their law-giver. When Jesus Christ comes with clouds, "every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."*

It is a man who will be revealed from heaven as the Judge of men; but that man being also the Son of God, is possessed of all the attributes of divinity. These are necessary to the execution of his office. The decision of so many cases involving innumerable particulars, in themselves intricate and perplexed, and connected with other cases by multiplied aspects and relations, will manifestly require knowledge not inferior to omniscience. Who but God could distinguish every individual in this vast assembly? Who but God could remember, if I may be permitted to use this term, all the incidents of their lives? Who but God could form a just estimate of their actions, by a direct and unerring reference to the circumstances in which they were performed, and the motives from which they proceeded? Who but God could bring to light the secrets of the heart, upon which the sentence will be founded in all cases, but more particularly in those where the external conduct was a superficial show; and where it is only by a disclosure of principles carefully concealed, that the persons will appear to be deserving of the doom? No created mind is capable of comprehending all the details of this multifarious transaction, or of attaining to the prerogative of God, who says, "I search the heart and the reins." Upon the adequate knowledge of the judge will be founded the rectitude of his decisions. He cannot err in judgment; and besides, he is essentially just. As he loves righteousness, loves it as necessarily as he exists, so he is exposed to no influence which might counteract the dictates of equity. He is subject to no partialities; he feels not the disturbing effects of pity or anger; he proceeds calmly, but steadily, to his purpose; and every sentence which he pronounces, rests upon the immutable basis of law. Among the multitude of the condemned, however severe may be their punishment, and however impatiently they may bear it, there will not be one who will dare to accuse his judge of injustice. In the mind of every man a consciousness of guilt will be deeply fixed; he will be compelled to blame himself alone, and to justify the sentence which has rendered him for ever miserable. The power of Jesus Christ is infinite, as well as his knowledge and his justice. The works which will signalize the great day, are operations of omnipotence. Omnipotence only could raise the dead from their graves, bring all nations to the tribunal, however reluctant to obey the summons, cast the ungodly into the flames of hell, and open the gates of heaven, to give admission to the righteous. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."†

Several circumstances are mentioned in Scripture, which will attend the coming of our Saviour to judgment. "Behold he cometh with clouds."‡ There seems to be no reason why these words should not be literally understood, as the coming is not figurative, and the manifestation of Christ will be made to the bodily eyes. When God descended to publish the law to the Israelites, there was a thick cloud upon the mountain, from which issued peals of thunder and flashes of lightning. It may be the design of the apostle to signify, that something similar will take place on the day of the Lord. He will be surrounded with clouds, in form and magnitude, and dazzling

* John v. 22, 26, 27.

* Rev. i. 7. †2 Thess. i. 7—9. ‡ Rev. i. 7.

splendour, corresponding to the grandeur of the occasion, and the majesty of the person who will come on them as his magnificent chariot. Among these clouds his throne will be erected. It is called in Scripture, a great white throne; and, as there will be a real representation to the senses, this may be understood to signify the appearance of a seat, on which he will sit, as human judges do, when causes are tried before them. He will be elevated above the assembly, and all eyes will be raised to him, in solemn expectation of his final award.

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."* Three sounds are distinctly mentioned, but I do not pretend to know what they are. There is probably an allusion to an important circumstance in the awful appearance of God upon Sinai: "On the third day, in the morning, there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." "And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice;"† that is, Moses said, as we are informed by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'I exceedingly fear and quake."‡ Those will be terrible sounds, which will shake the hearts of the guilty with fear, and be a solemn prelude to that more terrible voice, which will consign them to everlasting woe. I may remark in passing, that the opinion of those who affirm, that there is no such creature as an archangel, and that under this title, our Lord himself is described, is refuted by this passage, in which the Lord is plainly distinguished from the archangel; the most blundering writer meaning to say that, in the descent of Christ, his own voice will be heard, would not have changed the designation from Lord to archangel, and thus have led his readers to think of two persons, instead of one. It is certain that the judge will be attended by the heavenly host. He will come with his holy angels, perhaps in a visible form, who will not only increase the pomp and splendour of his appearance, and be spectators of a scene so interesting to the whole intelligent creation, but will have high and honourable offices to perform, both to the righteous and the wicked. "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." These are the tares growing in the field of the world; but the wheat shall be also gathered into the barn by the same ministry, and "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father."‖

The saints being caught up into the clouds, by the ministry of the angels, to meet the Lord in the air, and the wicked being left upon the earth, the judgment will proceed. Into the details we cannot enter, because our information is very general, and some things are expressed in figurative language. It is evidently the design of the following passage to teach us, that an exact inquiry will be made, and the judgment will be conducted with a strict regard to justice. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were open: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."§ No person can suppose that books will be literally used on this occasion. The books, therefore, seem to signify the different laws under which men have been placed, and by which justice requires that they should be tried: and the correctness of this idea may be inferred from the statement, that they will be "judged out of the books, according to their works," importing that there will be a comparison of their actions with a standard, and that the sentence will be founded upon the result.

First, Those who were not favoured with divine revelation, will be judged by the law of nature, or the law originally given to man as the rule of his conduct. Some portion of this law has been preserved among the Gentiles, partly by reason and partly by tradition; and although the traces of it are in some instances obliterated, and in others obscured, yet so much remains as to render them accountable beings, and to be the foundation of a judicial trial. Men have not lost all sense of justice, of truth, of humanity, of the duties arising from the various relations which they bear to one another. The Apostle Paul refers to their knowledge of morality, in these words: "When the Gentiles which have not the law," that is, the law in writing as the Jews had, "do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."* How far their ignorance will exempt them from responsibility, is a question of some difficulty, which is rashly decided when ignorance is pronounced to be a complete excuse. If the ancient Gentiles became so vain in their imaginations as to worship the creature instead of the Creator, and so blind in moral distinctions as to account gross sensuality no crime, and to practise unnatural lusts without a blush, does it follow that their idolatry and abandoned profligacy were not sins? To this conclusion the plea set up by some men in behalf of ignorance would lead us, but it receives no countenance from Scripture, which speaks of the conduct of those Gentiles in the strongest terms of reprobation. Ignorance may procure an alleviation of punishment, but unless absolutely invincible will not entitle any man to exemption from it. I have no doubt, however, that if we should fix the standard for the Gentiles by what they actually knew, not one of them would escape condemnation; not even their most celebrated teachers of morality, who were accused in their own time of indulging the vices against which they loudly declaimed. "As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law."†

Secondly, The Jews will be judged by the law of Moses and the prophets, which placed them in much more favourable circumstances than the Gentiles, for the knowledge of their duty; and vain will be their boast of the law, if they are not at last found to be transgressors. "As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law."‡ They are the servants who knew their master's will; and if they neglected to do it, they "shall be beaten with many stripes."

Thirdly, Christians in general will be judged by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and will be subjected to a heavier doom than either Heathens or Jews, in consequence of their superior privileges. The ignorance of individuals will not excuse them, because they might have known their duty in all its details; and equally unavailing will be the usual pleas of the infirmity of human nature, and the strength of temptation. In revelation there is every enforcement of duty which is fitted to operate upon the reason and conscience of intelligent beings; and the means are provided by which the guilty may obtain the favour of God, and the weak may be enabled to perform acceptable service. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."‖

Lastly, The saints will be judged out of the book

* Thess. iv. 16. † Exod. xix. 16, 19. ‡ Heb. xii. 21.
‖ Matt. xiii. 41, 43. § Rev. xx. 12.

* Rom. ii. 14, 15. † Rom. ii. 12. ‡ Ib. ‖ John iii. 19.

of life, which some understand to be the decree of God appointing them to salvation; but it seems rather to be the gospel, or the law of faith, which says, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."* On comparing their exercise and conduct with this law, it will be found that they are believers, and consequently that they have a claim to the glorious recompense promised to faith. Their title will be made manifest by their works, for according to their works all the dead will be judged. They will be produced as evidences of the genuineness of their faith; and it is on this ground that our Lord represents himself as saying to them, "I was hungry, and ye gave me meat." "I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink." I shall afterwards have an opportunity to consider more fully the judgment as it respects the righteous, and shall therefore pass over at present some important particulars.

The declaration of the Judge concerning those on his right hand that they are righteous, and concerning those on his left hand that they are wicked, will be sufficient to convince all in the immense assembly, that the sentence pronounced upon each individual is just. There will be no need of witnesses as in human courts, because the Judge is omniscient and unerring in his decisions. There will be a testimony to their rectitude, as it respects himself, in the bosom of every man. All his past actions will be recalled, and with all their circumstances will pass before his mind in rapid succession; his conscience will then be faithful, and it will re-echo the voice of the Judge, and draw from every tongue an acknowledgment that he is "a God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed."

When the investigation is finished, and every man is prepared to hear his doom, the Judge will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:" And to those on his left, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."† The execution of these sentences will take place in an inverse order, if we are to understand the following words, as stating the succession of events: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."‡ The wicked will be driven from the place of judgment, by the power of the Judge and the ministry of angels; while the saints will witness this awful display of justice and wrath, and then, in the train of the Redeemer, enter into the mansions of glory. As I shall have another opportunity to direct your attention to the state of the righteous in the world to come, I shall reserve till then the remarks which may be made upon this interesting subject.

The punishment of the wicked will consist, in the first place, in being driven from the presence of Christ, which will be a far heavier doom than to be excluded for ever from the light of the sun. It is to be deprived of happiness and of hope. Whatever connexion may have subsisted between him and them in this world, where many of them were members of his church, he will hold no more intercourse with them: "I know you not, ye workers of iniquity." It is represented, in the second place, as punishment by fire; but it is doubtful whether this ought to be literally understood. It is certain that another description of their doom admits of a figurative explanation,—when it is said that their worm shall never die; and as the worm and the fire are coupled together, the same mode of interpretation may be applied to both. The design probably is, by this terrible image, to give us an idea of the excruciating nature of the sufferings which they will endure in body and soul. It is a punishment in which they will be associated with the devil and his angels. The place was prepared for those apostate spirits, and will be the common receptacle of them and of wicked men, who joined the standard of revolt which they raised against the government of God. Throughout the whole extent of his mighty empire, purity and bliss will prevail, except one dark and remote region, the prison of the universe, the accursed spot to which rebels and outcasts are exiled. In a word, it will be everlasting punishment. By some, its eternity is denied; and their hypothesis is maintained by a train of reasoning founded on ignorance and presumption, and by violent perversion of Scripture. To every man who reads his Bible with attention and submission of mind, their arguing proves nothing but the earnestness of their wishes to obscure the evidence of truth. They would have it that future punishment is temporary, and therefore it must be so. The same word is used by our Lord to express the duration of the life of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked; and if the one is eternal, so must be the other.

Time having run its course, eternity will commence. The earth, on which men were appointed to act the preparatory part, will pass away, or be changed, for the precise import of the passages which relate to this subject is doubtful. This chosen theatre of the moral administration of God towards the human race, seems to be no longer wanted, when all his designs are accomplished. The event is announced in terms suitable to its grandeur, which awaken in the mind an indistinct but awful idea of a tremendous display of almighty power. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up."* The impression which the breaking up of the present system should make upon us, is at the same time pointed out, and a prospect is opened to us of a new order of things, of a regenerated system, of an earth which will never be polluted by sin, and of heavens whose brightness no clouds will obscure, and whose serenity no storms will disturb. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."†

"The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."‡ I have said nothing respecting them, because the Scripture has furnished us with no details. They will then be deprived of their present liberty, and shut up for ever in Tartarus. Their punishment will be augmented, and the end of the world is the time of torment, to which they now look forward with dread. "Art thou come to torment us before the time?"‖

* Mark xvi. 16. † Matt. xxv. 34, 41. ‡ Ib. 46.

* 2 Pet. iii. 10. † Ib. 11—13. ‡ Jude 6. ‖ Matt. viii. 29.

LECTURE LXIV.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

The Kingdom conferred on the Mediator—Distinguished from Christ's natural Kingdom—In what nature he administers its Affairs—Its Universality—View of it in Reference to the Church—Inquiry into the Duration of the mediatorial Kingdom and Office.

HAVING seen that our Lord, after his resurrection, ascended to heaven, and sat down at the right hand

of God, let us inquire into the nature of the kingdom which was conferred upon him. Before he left the world, he said to his disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."* David thus addressed him, by the spirit of prophecy, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."† His kingdom is expressly mentioned in this passage; and it is described by the usual ensigns of royalty—a throne, on which the Monarch sits, and a sceptre, which he holds in his hand as an emblem of authority. The design of the sacred writer in using these figures—for in the present case the words cannot be literally understood—is to lead our thoughts to the thing signified by them, the Sovereign dominion of Christ.

It is his mediatorial kingdom of which I am at present speaking, or the kingdom which belongs to him, considered not simply as the Son of God, but as mediator. Upon due attention to the words already quoted, and others of a similar import, it appears to be a kingdom given to him, a kingdom to which he was anointed, a kingdom held by gift and delegation from God his God, or the Father, who engaged in the eternal covenant to reward his obedience with the empire of the Universe. As the Son of God, he does not reign by gift or delegation, but by original right; for, being the Creator of all things, he is by necessary consequence their Governor, possessing absolute authority over his own works, a power to continue, to change, to annihilate them according to his pleasure, and for the manifestation of his glory. Creatures are essentially dependent upon him who made them, for the act of creation gave them being, but did not render them self-existent; and this truth will be evident whether we consider them as inanimate, or as endowed with life and activity. As matter is known from experience to be inert, incapable of changing its state, the movements and arrangements which we observe in the material system, must be attributed to an external cause, namely, the power of its Author. Living beings, and particularly men, who are possessed of understanding and will, often act capriciously and perversely, so that no steady plan could be pursued, no design worthy of his Maker could be accomplished, if he did not constantly interpose to restrain them within certain bounds, and to overrule their actions to an end very different from that which they contemplate. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."‡ He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of it he restraineth."‖ Such is the natural government of the Son of God over the works of his hands, visible and invisible, on earth and in heaven.

His mediatorial kingdom is not different in respect, if I may speak so, of its territory and its subjects. When we say that he received a kingdom from the Father, we do not compare him to an earthly monarch, who, reigning over one country by original right, acquires dominion over another by inheritance or by conquest. A new kingdom in this sense was impossible; for where should it have been found, since already every region of space acknowledged his sway? In order to prevent confusion of ideas, and to avoid perplexing ourselves with the inquiry, how Jesus Christ could receive a kingdom, if he was from the beginning Lord of all, we have only to consider his mediatorial kingdom as being his original kingdom, invested with a new form, wearing a new aspect, administered for a new end. The proper view of the subject is this: that our Saviour being, as—mediator, the servant of the Father, was authorised by him to conduct, in subservience to the design of his office, the affairs of the universe, which had always been under his direction. Strictly, his investiture with a kingdom was his investiture with a right to exert the power which he had always possessed, for a specific purpose, namely, the salvation of the church; and it may be imperfectly illustrated by supposing a son, who was conjoined with his father in the kingdom, to begin by his consent a new system of administration, with a view to the good of his subjects. In this case his power would not be augmented, but it would be exerted in a different series of operations. In consequence of his advancement to this kingdom, the mediator makes all things directly or indirectly, by a more remote or a nearer influence, work together for the establishment, the trial, the purification, the increase, the final triumph and perfection of that select society, which he redeemed with his blood, and which is placed under his immediate care. He is "head over all things to the church which is his body."* Hence we perceive that they err, who confine his mediatorial kingdom to the church, not considering that, while it is the chief object of his attention, the whole system of things is so managed as to be subservient to its interests; in the same way as, by the constitution of nature, the earth, with its mountains and valleys, its springs and rivers, and various productions, was designed to minister to man. "All things are yours; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.†

In consequence of this constitution, the course of events is changed, not sensibly, but in respect of the influence which they exert, and the point in which they will terminate. While the providence of our exalted Redeemer extends its vigilance and care to every being and every occurrence, there is one design which is contemplated and pursued amidst the ever-varying scenes of the world. There is a plan within a plan; and that which is least considered, and by many is entirely overlooked, is first in his intention, and will be most glorious in its completion. When this plan is finished, the complicated machinery by which it was carried on will be demolished; the succession of generations will stop; the frame of society will be dissolved; and the heavens and the earth which now are, will be annihilated or changed. Jesus Christ reigns as the King of his church; and that he may afford all the protection and advantage to his people which they need and expect, he is also King of the world. Empires rise and fall, individuals are born and die, the Gospel visits one country and retires from another, under his superintendence and agency. Angels descend from their bright abodes to minister to the heirs of salvation, and grace falls gently like the dew upon the souls of his people, to prepare them for a more perfect state. As a King, he distributes royal gifts: "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."‡ To his kingdom, as it respects the church, your attention will be afterwards more particularly directed.

The mediatorial kingdom is administered by our incarnate Redeemer. This is a view of the subject, which demands particular attention. The kingdom is administered by Jesus Christ, considered not simply as a divine person, but as a divine person united to human nature, which shares in the dignity and glory of his state of exaltation. Human nature was the organ by which he manifested his love to our race. Having assumed

* Matt. xxviii. 1. † Ps. xlv. 6, 7. ‡ Dan. iv. 35.
‖ Ps. lxxvi. 10.

* Eph. i. 22, 23. † 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. ‡ Acts ii. 33.

it, he humbled himself, endured the contradiction of sinners and the evils of life, and submitted to the ignominious death of the cross. May we not conceive that our nature is the organ, by which he manifests the glory which the Father has conferred upon him, as the reward of his voluntary and meritorious sufferings? Let me not be understood to insinuate, that it is now endowed with divine perfections. I know that, as it is a created nature, its powers must always be comparatively limited, although enlarged beyond calculation, so as to leave the loftiest angel at an inconceivable distance. It is in human nature that he is contemplated and acknowledged by angels and men in heaven, as the Lord of all worlds. In the symbolical descriptions of his exaltation, he appears as "a lamb that had been slain," that is, in his assumed nature, which alone was capable of suffering and dying, and is hailed by the voices of ten thousand times ten thousand around the throne, and by a chorus of praise from every part of the creation. According to the Psalmist, it is man whom God "has crowned with glory and honour:" it is man whom he has "set over the works of his hands;" it is under the feet of man that he has put the "fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas."* From the commentary of an apostle, we learn, that these things are spoken of our Saviour.† It is by man that the last and solemn act of the divine government will be performed, when the millions of mankind shall be assembled before the tribunal, and judged according to their works. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."‡

Revelation unfolds to our wondering eyes, a view of the state of the universe altogether new. The conclusion to which reason conducts us, is, that He who created all things, upholds them by his power, and guides them by his wisdom. This conclusion is not contradicted, but rather is confirmed by the Scriptures, which throw new light upon this as well as other truths which were formerly known, and extricate it from the obscurity and perplexity in which it was involved by the speculations of science falsely so called. We still say that men and angels, beings visible and invisible, animate and inanimate, are sustained by the almighty arm which gave them existence, and are subject to its controul. But instructed in the personal distinctions of the godhead, which unaided reason could not have discovered, we learn that the administration of universal nature is the peculiar province of Him, who, on the ground of a mysterious relation, is called the Son; and that he exercises this high office in human nature, which, by an act equally mysterious, he has made his own. To this wonderful fact we reverently give our assent; but perhaps it is not so often, and so distinctly present to our minds as it ought to be, when its importance is considered; and we are apt to forget, when we are surveying the diversified scenes of creation, that every movement is effected by him who died upon the cross, as a sacrifice for our sins. What an interesting thought, that heaven and earth are obedient to the voice of one who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and who retains amidst his glory the feelings of a friend and brother! What honour has God conferred upon our nature, by setting it far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, both in this world and that which is to come. It was this instance of the divine goodness, which excited the admiration and gratitude of the holy Psalmist, when, contemplating the heavens, he burst out into this devout exclamation, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of man that thou visitest him?"* This is the true system of the universe, full of consolation and hope to believers, although philosophers may be ignorant of it, or may treat it with scorn. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."†

I have already said, that the mediatorial kingdom of Christ is a gift of the Father, and properly ought to be considered as the recompense of his humiliation and sufferings. This connexion is stated in the following passage, which at the same time gives a sublime view of the exalted state of our Redeemer, and shows the unlimited extent of his dominions. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."‡ It appears from this and other passages, that nothing is exempt from his authority. He gives law to matter, and to the irrational tribes; he commands the armies of heaven; he claims the inhabitants of the earth as his subjects; he rules over the spirits of darkness; he is the Lord of the dead and of the living. But it is not necessary to our present purpose to take a minute survey of his mediatorial kingdom in all its extent. Let us view it in relation to the church, which is the peculiar object of his care, and for the sake of which all power in heaven and on earth was given to him. The proper object of his mediatorial kingdom is the church, although it embraces many other things; the world engages his attention no farther than it is subservient to the present good and final salvation of the church: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."‖

I remark, in the first place, That, having ascended to heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, he founded the church by the ministry of his apostles. During his personal ministry, he announced that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The disciples, imbued with Jewish prejudices, asked, after his resurrection, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"§ dreaming of a temporal monarchy. It commenced on the day of Pentecost, when he poured out the Holy Ghost upon his disciples, to qualify them for the work of preaching the gospel, and erecting the church. Peter, referring to what they had witnessed, called upon the Jews to consider it as a proof of the great authority with which our Redeemer was invested: "He being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."¶ Having vanquished on the cross the god of this world, he proceeded to rescue from his power unhappy men whom he had long held in bondage, and to make them the subjects of his own kingdom. The difficulties with which the enterprise of the apostles was attended, were many and formidable; sufficient, it might have been thought, to render their endeavours abortive. There never was an undertaking, the failure of which might have been

* Ps. viii. 4. † Heb. ii. 6. ‡ John v. 26—29.

* Ps. viii. 4. † Ps. xcvii. 1, 2. ‡ Phil. ii. 5—11.
‖ Ps. ii. 6. § Acts i. 6. ¶ Ib. ii. 33—36.

more confidently predicted. Were twelve fishermen to convert the world to a religion repugnant to their former notions, and habits, and tastes, and to unite the most hostile sects in one society of love? What folly in uneducated men to make an attempt which would have been too arduous for the learned and the eloquent! Yet they did succeed; and Christianity obtained such an interest in the minds and affections of thousands, as paved the way for its subsequent diffusion over a considerable part of the earth. Jews and Gentiles were brought together in holy fellowship; and a community of faith, and worship, and interest, was established among men of different countries and languages. The design of employing instruments so inadequate, in respect of natural talents and accomplishments, was to illustrate the power of Jesus Christ, and to show that he is the author of the second as well as of the first creation. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."* The first act of royal authority which he performed after ascending his throne, was to establish his kingdom upon earth; and the means corresponded to its nature. It is a spiritual kingdom: and was not erected by force of arms, but by the persuasive influence of the truth, and the invisible operations of grace. "He shall come down as rain on the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth."† The kingdom of heaven came not with observation, with noise and external pomp; but its progress was silent and gradual, and was illustrated by the apt similitude of seed cast into the ground, which springs and grows up, a man knows not how. On the day of Pentecost, a train of events commenced, which will ultimately realize the vision and the prophecy. A stone, cut out without hands, brake in pieces the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw; and it became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This is the interpretation:—"In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."‡

In the second place, He prescribed the form and order of his church, enacting laws and ordinances to be observed in it, and claiming absolute authority over the souls and consciences of the members. Before he ascended to heaven—for even then he possessed regal power, although he had not been formally invested with it—he appointed baptism and the sacred supper, and commanded the Gospel to be preached; and afterwards he enabled the apostles, by the spirit of wisdom, to arrange all the parts of the system. The church is a voluntary society in this sense, that no person is compelled by force to enter into it, and he only is a genuine member who has joined it from conviction and choice; but there is this important difference between it and other voluntary societies, that the members have no right to settle the terms of their union, but must implicitly submit to its original constitution. Strictly human legislation has no place here; the proper province of the rulers is to execute the laws already made by the sovereign; their decrees possess only subordinate authority, and are not binding, except as they are declarative of his will. "One is our Master, even Christ." "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him."‖ The duty of the church is to submit to his authority; and it is not performed unless his word be received as the only rule of faith and practice, and every thing which is done in religion be exactly conformable to his commands. In the world, his law may be disregarded and violated; but it should be held sacred in the church, which is his kingdom. In the exercise of his authority he abrogated the law of Moses, which had been binding for fifteen hundred years, and was fondly supposed by the Jews to be of perpetual obligation. He published a new and spiritual law, which will continue in force till the end of time; he removed the priests and Levites from the altar, and established in their room apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers; he changed the nature of the society, by associating the Gentiles with the Jews; he made all places sacred as well as Jerusalem, and ordained that, from the rising to the setting of the sun, incense should be offered to his name, and a pure offering. As soon as he had announced to his disciples that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth, he said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."*

The authority of Jesus Christ over the church, is exclusive of the authority of man. Councils may be assembled to declare the truth, and condemn heresies, but they can make no new article of faith; they may regulate subordinate matters, the determination of which lies within the sphere of experience and prudence; but they can neither increase nor diminish the sum of our moral obligations. The supremacy claimed by the Pope, is an invasion of the royal prerogative of Christ, although he calls himself his vicar or substitute. He has intruded into this office, and assumes a paramount power; pretending to forgive sins, changing the ordinances, and repealing the laws of heaven, and extending his jurisdiction over the visible and the invisible world. "He exalts himself above all that is called God, and is worshipped; and, as God, he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." Hence, instead of being the vicar of Christ, he is justly called Antichrist, his rival and antagonist, who has usurped dominion over the church, and supplanted the authority of its only lawful head by his own. The connexion between church and state has been generally, and, as some think, uniformly productive of the same evil, in a greater or a less degree. The alliance is formed on this principle, that the church shall yield something in return for the favour and protection of the state. Without entering upon the question respecting the lawfulness of civil establishments, I content myself with remarking, that, if an earthly sovereign is constituted head of the church, and its affairs are conducted according to acts of parliament, a foreign power is admitted, which, to a certain extent, secularizes his kingdom, and intrenches upon his paramount authority.

The form of the church, under the present dispensation, is not delineated with the same minuteness which we observe in the law of Moses. There every thing is prescribed, the place, and the times, and the ministers of worship, the oblations to be presented, and the rites to be performed, in public and in private; nothing is left to human discretion. The New Testament furnishes only an outline, or general principles deduced from occasional hints, and the example of the primitive times. We are fully satisfied with the constitution of our own church, as agreeable to the Scriptural model; but finding that wise and good men adopt different views, and are equally confident that they are conformable to the apostolical standard, we should beware of contending about the subject with the vehemence and bitterness of zeal, which it has too often elicited; and should cultivate charitable sentiments toward those who hold the same faith, although they do not, in all things, walk

* Ps. cx. 2. † Ib. lxxii. 6. ‡ Dan. ii. 44.
‖ Matt. xxiii. 8. Ps. xlv. 11.

* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

according to the same rule. Above all, let us guard against the narrow, unchristian idea, that we alone are the true church, and consequently, that the kingdom of Christ is confined to our little society. All belong to it, who sincerely acknowledge him as their Lord, and are willing to be guided by his word; mistakes about inferior points, and occasional deviations, through ignorance, from the rule which he has prescribed, will not hinder them from being owned as faithful subjects. The kingdom of Christ is catholic. As it is universal by right, so it comprehends within its boundaries all who believe and obey the truth, however diversified by external profession. Some of them may be found even in that pretended church, which is in reality a synagogue of Satan, although it is not easy to conceive how they can retain their allegiance to Christ within the dominions of his adversary; but it is supposed that a remnant will be left there to the last; for immediately before the fall of the mystical Babylon, this warning is given; "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."*

In the third place, He upholds the church throughout all generations, by a constant succession of members. The great promise of eternal life, which he has made to his followers, will be performed in another world; their interest in his salvation secures them against the sting of death, but not against death itself; each in his order, when he has completed his term of obedience and trial, lies down in the grave. When we observe the havock which is daily made among the ranks of his disciples, and see those, who professed the truth, and evinced their sincerity by the stedfastness of their faith and the devoted zeal with which they served him, removed, one after another, into the house of silence, where there is no work, or wisdom, or device, we might be tempted to prognosticate the most gloomy result; and we naturally exclaim, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." But, while the individuals perish, the race remains: *genus immortale manet.*† "Instead of the fathers, he takes the children;" the places of those who have fallen, are supplied by their own families, and more frequently by strangers; and thus his promise is fulfilled, that the gates of hell, of *ades*, the invisible world, into which the souls of the departed enter, and the grave, which may be considered as its portal, shall not prevail against the church. In fulfilling this promise, several acts of his royal authority and power are exerted. Having received from his Father, after his ascension, the gifts of the Spirit, he bestows them upon those persons whom he is pleased to employ, to qualify them for preaching the Gospel, which is the grand means of gathering subjects into his kingdom of grace; or, in the words of an apostle, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."‡ Papists, and some Protestants, boast of the regular succession of their clergy from the apostles; but the latter must acknowledge that, as the Church of Rome was the medium of communication, it is a very corrupt channel in which power has been conveyed to them. This we know, that, in every age, men have been found, who willingly consecrated themselves to his service, and their labours have been crowned with a blessing. Notwithstanding the opposition which it may encounter, he preserves the Gospel in a particular place, till all the elect there are converted; and he sends it into any country, where he has designs of mercy to accomplish, in spite of the efforts of men and devils to exclude it. The power of Rome, which had conquered the world, could not hinder the propagation and triumph of the truth: and the obstacles to its entrance, or its progress, in India, in China, in Turkey, will give way when the time to favour those regions is come. The words of God respecting the temple, are equally applicable to the opposition with which the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah has to contend: "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."* He exerts a secret power upon the heart, which the strongest prejudices and the most inveterate habits of sin are not able to resist. As the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, his servants do not fight for him; and it is only in a figure that the church is represented as "terrible, like an army with banners." Our religion forbids the employment of external force in its propagation and defence, and leaves it to Antichrist, who in the want of arguments, has recourse to the sword, and terrifies into compliance those whom he has failed to persuade. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are not therefore ineffectual. They are mighty, through God, to pull down the strongholds of sin, to cast down lofty imaginations, and to bring every thought into captivity to Christ. There is no man who may not become a subject of this kingdom. However remote he may now be from this character, however hostile may be his sentiments and feelings, he may undergo a change as sudden and wonderful as that of Paul, who, from being a persecutor, became an apostle, and a preacher of the faith which once he destroyed. The grace of our exalted Redeemer operates silently, but surely; it always gains its end; and there are daily added to the church such as shall be saved. "All they that be fat upon earth, shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him; and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this."†

In the fourth place, He defends the church against her enemies. These may be considered as invisible and visible. By the former, we mean the spirits of darkness, who have a kingdom of their own to maintain, the overthrow of which will be the sure consequence of the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. Besides the the efforts which they make, by the instrumentality of men who too readily concur with them, they labour immediately to accomplish their designs, by temptations so contrived as to disquiet the faith of Christians, and allure them into the paths of sin. How they are fitted for the conflict, and by what means, although the struggle be severe and injuries be sometimes sustained, they prove ultimately victorious, we learn from the following exhortation; "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."‡ The truth, couched under this figurative language, is, that grace is communicated to believers, by which, if skilfully and actively employed, they shall render abortive the attempts of their spiritual adversaries. The power by which they conquer, is not their own, but the power of Jesus Christ, and to him the glory of the victory is due. The visible enemies of the Church are ungodly men, and especially such of them as are possessed of secular authority, or can boast of talents

* Rev. xviii. 4. 5.
† The race remains immortal.
‡ Eph. iv. 12, 13.

* Zech. iv. 7.
† Ps. xii. 29—31.
‡ Eph. vi. 13—16.

and learning, who, in many instances, have united to arrest the progress of the truth by the terrors of the sword, and to bring it into discredit by argument, misrepresentation, and ridicule. Hitherto they have not prevailed; and experience shows us, as well as the word of God, that we have nothing to fear from the greatest efforts which they may yet make. The repeated persecutions to which the Church was subjected in the first three centuries, are recorded in history. Every thing was done by the combined wisdom and power of the Roman empire, to crush the rising religion; and hopes were entertained and expressed, that the Christian superstition, so it was called, would be extirpated from the earth. But it emerged from the scene of suffering and blood, with increased stature and renovated strength, still contending with paganism for the victory; and the struggle was closed by the conversion of Constantine, who planted the cross upon the capitol of Rome. We have heard of the dreadful conflict which the church had to sustain with the antichristian power, of the cruelties which where inflicted upon the friends of truth, and the torrents of blood which were shed; and how the faithful were driven into obscure retreats, and compelled for a long season to "prophesy in sackcloth." But at the Reformation, the church rose from her ashes more glorious than ever. Now, what has protected the feeble? what has given power to the faint? what has enabled the minority to maintain a contest so alarming to flesh and blood, and in which no human glory would be gained? It was the grace of Jesus Christ which supported the faith and patience of his followers; it was his Providence which counteracted the designs of their enemies, and marked the boundary beyond which their violence should not pass. "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."* This is the declaration of him who sits at the right hand of the Father: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn."† The adversaries of Zion have successively fallen, and, if their memorial has not perished from the earth, their names are branded with infamy; but the church has survived the revolutions of empire, and will continue a monument of the power and love of her exalted Head, till he shall appear in the clouds of heaven, to terminate the warfare, and to receive his people into his eternal kingdom. "He must reign, till all his enemies be put under his feet."‡

Having taken a view of the Mediatorial kingdom of Christ upon earth, chiefly in relation to the church, I observe, in the last place, that he reigns in the kingdom of glory. He is the Lord of the invisible, as well as of the visible world, and nothing is done in either but according to his will. Heaven was purchased with his blood, and it is fit that to him should be committed the uncontrolled disposal of its glories and joys. He ascended to take possession of it as the reward due to his obedience and death, and to prepare it for his followers. Seated upon the throne, he sways the sceptre of universal dominion, and wears a crown which will never fade away. Upon earth his right to rule is disputed, and his authority is resisted by men of corrupt minds, who do not choose to submit their licentious liberty to the restraints of his law; but, in heaven, every tongue acknowledges him to be Lord, and every heart rejoices to obey him. To him it belongs to admit into the kingdom of glory, or to exclude from it; for he opens, and no man can shut; he shuts, and no man can open. When the saints die, he receives their spirits into the mansions of rest, and assigns his place to each individual; for the rank which they hold, and the degree of felicity which they enjoy, are apportioned by his wisdom and love. Accordingly, they are represented as prostrating themselves, and casting down their crowns, in humble acknowledgment that they hold them as the gifts of his bounty, not as the reward of their personal merit, or of the services which they performed to him upon earth: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power."* The angels join with them in adoration and homage: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."† We know little of the invisible state; the revelation is partial, and the notices are obscure; but we are assured that it is under the administration of our Saviour, and that its inhabitants are happy under his care. His glory will not be always concealed. At the destined hour, he will appear in the clouds, and display his power in pronouncing sentence upon the assembled human race; and every knee shall bow before him, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord.

There is a passage which is confessedly obscure, and has exercised the diligence of commentators, upon which, on account of its close connexion with the present subject, it will be proper to bestow some observations: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."‡

It is evident that nothing in this passage can be understood to import, that the time will come when the Son, considered as the second Person of the Trinity, shall be reduced to a state of inferiority to the Father. If he is at present equal, the equality will ever continue, because it is not founded on favour or temporary arrangement, but on the possession of the same essence and the same infinite perfections. Between persons to whom the same nature belongs, there may be a distinction of order, but there can be no difference of rank and dignity. In what sense, then, is it said that the Son himself shall be subject to the Father?

In order to obtain some light upon this point, it is necessary to refer to what is said before: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." The words in the one place serve to explain those in the other; for what is first called the delivering up of the kingdom to the Father, is afterwards expressed by the subjection of the Son to him.

The kingdom which he will deliver up to the Father, is not the kingdom pertaining to him as a Divine person having an original and indefeasible right to govern his own works, to reign over his own creation. This dominion is founded in the relation between him and his creatures, and could be conceived to cease only by their ceasing to exist. While they continue to be, he cannot be divested of his authority either by the authority of another, or by his own voluntary act; not by the authority of another, because he has no superior; not by his own act, because he could not renounce the essential prerogative of Godhead.

We have seen that there is another kingdom which he possesses by gift, and which was conferred upon him for a particular purpose, namely, that by his power he might accomplish the design of his death upon the cross, in the conversion and final salvation of his people. He rules, if I may speak so, in the Father's place, and by delegated authority; and this arrangement is founded on their mutual counsels for the redemption of the church. To the eye of faith, guided in its researches into the economy of the universe by the light of revelation, Jesus Christ appears seated

* John iv. 4. † Isa. liv. 17. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 25.

* Rev. iv. 11. † Ib. v. 12. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 24—26, 28.

upon the throne, and exercising his mighty sway over all its provinces.

From this view of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, it is evident that the purpose for which it was established was temporary. Hence we perceive what may be understood to be the meaning of "delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father." The kingdom will end when its design is accomplished; he will cease to exercise an authority which has no longer an object. When all the elect are converted by the truth, and being collected into one body, are presented to the Father a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; when idolatry, superstition and heresy are overthrown, and all evil is expelled from the kingdom of God; when the plans and efforts of evil spirits are defeated, and they are shut up in their prison, from which there is no escape; when death has yielded up his spoils, and laid his sceptre at the feet of his conqueror; when the grand assize has been held, his impartial sentence has pronounced the doom of the human race, and their everlasting abodes are allotted to the righteous and the ungodly, nothing will remain to be done by the power with which our Saviour was invested at his ascension; and his work being finished, his commission will expire.

On this subject we cannot speak with certainty, and are in great danger of error, because the event is future, and our information is imperfect. Here analogy fails, and the utmost caution is necessary in borrowing an illustration from human affairs; but, without insinuating that the two cases are exactly similar, may we not say that, as a regent or vicegerent of a king, to whom the royal authority has been intrusted for a time, resigns it at the close, and the sovereign himself resumes the reins of government; so our Redeemer, who now sways the sceptre of the universe, will return his delegated power to him from whom he received it, and a new order of things will commence, under which the dependence of men upon the Godhead will be immediate; and Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one in essence, counsel, and operation, will reign for ever over the inhabitants of heaven. This is the probable meaning of the words, "Then shall the Son himself be subject unto him that put all things under him."

It may be objected, that what has been now said concerning the termination of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, is contrary to those passages of Scripture which represent it as an everlasting kingdom. But, although the objection is worthy of attention, it is not unanswerable. The terms *everlasting* and *for ever* do not always import absolute eternity, but sometimes signify only a long duration. The ordinances of the ceremonial law are called "statutes for ever," although they have for centuries been abolished, because they were to continue throughout all the generations of Israel. The kingdom of the Messiah is contrasted with the kingdoms of men; and in the book of Daniel, where the epithet everlasting is applied to it, it is opposed to the four great monarchies of ancient times, and notice is given that, while they should disappear in succession, it would survive all civil commotions and political changes, and be commensurate with the world itself. It will not cease till the frame of nature is dissolved, and then it will merge in the eternal kingdom of God. The glory of having once possessed this kingdom, and administered it with wisdom and righteousness, will ever remain to him, and will call forth a tribute of praise from the countless myriads of his subjects.

Perhaps the words of the apostle may be understood to import the termination not only of the mediatorial kingdom, but of the mediatorial office; for he says, that the Son will be subject to the Father, that "God may be all in all;" that a new mode of intercourse with the divine nature may commence, and the communion be immediate and complete.

In the present state, we have not immediate access to the Father; our fellowship is carried on through the mediation of the Son. Even after men have been reconciled to him, the interposition of the third person is necessary, that their friendship may not be broken by their daily transgressions, and that the purity of his nature may be unsullied by his intercourse with the frail and guilty children of the dust. Hence it was necessary, that Jesus Christ should continue a priest after he had died upon the cross, and should enter into heaven with his own blood, to make intercession for us. When the present dispensation has come to an end, this necessity will no longer exist. The design of the mediation of Christ, was to bring men back to God, by sacrifice and intercession. It is accomplished, when pardoned, purified, and translated from earth to heaven, they are so holy that their Maker can look with unqualified approbation upon his own work, and, as in the beginning, pronounce it to be good. May we not, therefore, conceive the mediation to terminate like any other plan, in the execution of which the intention of the contriver has been fulfilled? Why should intercession continue, when there are no sins to be forgiven, and no wants to be supplied, and when the objects of redeeming love are established in a state of perfection beyond the possibility of failure?

It will still be true, that Jesus Christ did once sustain, and gloriously execute, the high office of mediator between God and man. He will still be the object of the love, and gratitude, and praise of the saints. He will still shine as the sun of the celestial world. The millions of the redeemed around the throne will still be the monuments of his triumph. The exercise of his office will cease for the most honourable of all reasons, because its end has been fully gained; but the glory of it will be for ever celebrated in the songs of the blessed: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

What has now been said, is proposed solely as a probable opinion; it would be presumptuous to speak confidently upon a subject so obscure. There are some passages of Scripture which seem to militate against the idea of the termination of the mediatorial office of our Saviour. His continued agency in this character, may be inferred from the declaration, that the Lamb will be the light of the heavenly city.* But the apparent discrepance will be removed by conceding, as we most willingly do, that he will retain all the honours due to him as the person who achieved the redemption of the church; and that the great manifestation of the divine glory which will engage the attention of the saints, will be that which is made in him as the incarnate Son and servant of the Father.

Again, it is said, that "the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters;"† and hence it may be inferred, that he will continue the exercise of his office as the medium through which the happiness of the saints will be communicated. But the words admit of an interpretation in perfect unison with our doctrine; for the felicity of the world to come will be the exclusive effect of his mediation, and it will be owing solely to him, that they who were reconciled to God upon earth, have immediate access to his throne, and know even as they are known.

Once more, it is said of him as mediator, that he ever liveth to make intercession.‡ But the word *for ever*, as we have already said, does not always denote eternity; for the ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation are called statutes for ever, although they were abolished by the death of Christ. The passage now quoted may therefore be understood to signify nothing more, than that his intercession will last till its de-

* Rev. xxi. 23. † Ib. vii. 17. ‡ Heb. vii. 25.

signs are accomplished. He ever lives to make intercession, and does not die like the sacrificing and interceding priests of the law; as he reigns for ever, or from age to age, and does not, like earthly princes, descend from the throne and lie down in the grave.

"When this work is finished," says Dr. Owen, "then shall all the mediatory actings of Christ cease for evermore; for God will then have completely finished the whole design of his wisdom and grace in the constitution of his person and offices." He adds, "I would extend this no farther than as to what concerneth the exercise of Christ's mediatory office with respect to the church below, and the enemies of it. But there are some things which belong to the essence of this state which shall continue unto all eternity."* I subjoin the words of Dr. Smith: "When all the designs (of the kingdom of Christ) are accomplished, the mediatorial system as to all these (its present) modes of exercise shall cease; Christ will no longer have to act as a redeemer and saviour, the number of his elect will have been accomplished, and his church presented perfect and complete to himself, and to his Divine Father; as a faithful ambassador, whose commission is finished, he will honourably give it back to him who appointed him, and will return to his own personal station, as the Divine and Eternal Son; and then will a new order of the moral universe commence, and the unspeakably vast assemblage of holy creatures, delivered and for ever secured from sin and misery, shall possess the IMMEDIATE fruition of the Father. In his sovereign love the scheme of mediatorial redemption originated, and its blessed completion shall be, in the most sublime and eternally admirable manner, "unto the praise of his glory." God will be all things in all to those happy beings."†

LECTURE LXV.

ON THE APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION.

The Application of Redemption: its Necessity, and what it implies—External Means of it: the Word and Ordinances—Difference between the External and Internal Call of the Gospel—The latter the work of the Holy Spirit—Proof that Conversion is the Effect of Divine Grace.

THE purchase of salvation was made by Jesus Christ in the character of high priest, when he paid the price of his precious blood. But although it was the consequence of this transaction, that the salvation of his people was certain, yet something farther was necessary to make them actual partakers of it. Notwithstanding the propitiatory sacrifice of the cross, they come into the world in a state of guilt and depravity, and often remain in that state for a considerable time. It might seem to us consonant to justice, that the atonement having been made, the benefit of it should be enjoyed by every individual for whom it was offered, as soon as he is in a capable state; or that, in the first moment of his existence, he should be set free from the curse of the law, and regenerated by the Spirit even in the womb of his mother. We find, however, that such is not the case; and in order to account for it, we should reflect, that God is not bound by our notions of fitness and propriety, which are often founded on narrow views; that reasons are manifest to his understanding, which give rise to a procedure different from what we should have expected; that he had an undoubted right, when he purposed the redemption of mankind, to settle according to his own will the season and order of its application; and that the demands of justice will be fully satisfied, if all the elect are delivered from condemnation and misery, whether the event take place at an earlier or a later period. It is enough, that the terms of the covenant which was made with Christ are ultimately fulfilled. The grand stipulation was, that if "he would make his soul an offering for sin," he should "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;"* and all the circumstances relative to the communication of its benefits, were the subject of subordinate arrangements. The sovereignty of God in the dispensation of grace is displayed, not only in the selection of the persons, to whom it is exercised without any reason on their part, and often with a disregard of the grounds of human preference; but also in calling some of them at the first hour, and others not till the last. With respect to the time, nothing that we know of is necessary, but that they should be called during the course of their life, beyond which the season of mercy does not extend.

The purchase of Redemption by Christ in the character of our Priest, secures the salvation of his people. But, as they are by nature children of wrath even as others, they must undergo a change both relative and real; relative in respect of the law, by being acquitted from its charges, and real in respect of their views and dispositions. In the language of Scripture, "their blind eyes must be opened, and they must be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive the remission of their sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith which is in Christ."† Accordingly, the divine procedure towards them is represented in the following order: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified;" and these are preliminary steps to their final salvation: for, "whom he justified, them also he glorified."‡

The external means which God employs in the application of redemption, are his ordinances, and particularly his Word, read and heard. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes."‖ Some, indeed, have supposed, that there is a revelation of grace, (which, however, they acknowledge to be obscure) in the dispensations of providence. They can only mean, that there are such appearances in the course of the moral government of God, as may lead to the conclusion that he is placable, and will pardon sinners who repent. It is enough to say that, with respect to this revelation, the Scriptures are silent, or rather they virtually deny it, while they declare that it is from themselves alone that we derive authentic information of his gracious designs. We see his goodness and patience in providence; but, although thoughtless men may infer, that he is an easy indulgent Being, and such a one as themselves, the indications of nature will not relieve from its fears, a mind conscious of guilt and deeply sensible of demerit. By a person under a conviction of sin, the anxious question will be asked, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the Most High God?"§ and ignorant of the effectual means of appeasing his wrath, he will be ready to offer his flocks and herds as an atonement, and even his first-born son, as men have sometimes done in the madness of despair. If there is a revelation of grace in the dispensations of providence, the abettors of this opinion may be called upon to produce instances in which it has been effectual to turn sinners to God. Nothing is more vain than speculations concerning what may be; let it be shown that the thing has actually happened. Where shall we find those converts of natural light? Is it among the ancient philosophers who talked of

* Owen on the Person of Christ, chap. xix. xx.
† Smith's Scripture Testimony, Book iv. chap. 4.

* Is. liii. 10, 11. † Acts xxvi. 18. ‡ Rom. viii. 29, 30.
‖ Rom. i. 16. § Mic. vi. 6.

virtue, but did not practise it? Is it among modern heathens, who, amidst the dreadful penances to which some of them submit for the expiation of their sins, discover gross ignorance of the character of God, and of the genuine nature and spirit of religion?

This opinion has been adopted by a late writer in his New Literal Translation of the Epistles, with this difference, that he traces the notions entertained by heathens of the placability of the divine nature, to the source of revelation. "The heathens in general," says Dr. Macknight, "believed their deities placable, and, in that persuasion, offered to them propitiatory sacrifices, and expected to be pardoned and blessed by them even in a future state. But these hopes they did not derive from the law or light of nature, but from the promise which God made to the first parents of mankind. For that promise being handed down by tradition to Noah and his sons, they communicated the knowledge thereof, together with the use of sacrifices, to all their descendants. So that the hope of pardon and immortality, which the pious heathen entertained, was the very hope which the gospel hath now clearly brought to light, and was derived from the same source, namely, from divine revelation."* It seems from this statement, that the heathens have the means of salvation without the written Word. It may be objected that Paul expressly affirms, that men are justified by faith, which implies a revelation of the Saviour, and seems to exclude those who have not been favoured with it; for he tells us that it comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. But, fatal as this objection may be deemed to his hypothesis, this writer removes it with great ease by a definition of faith contrived for the purpose. "Faith does not consist in the belief of particular doctrines, far less in the belief of doctrines which men never had an opportunity of knowing, but in such an earnest desire to know and do the will of God, as leads them conscientiously to use such means as they have for gaining the knowledge of his will, and for doing it when found. And inasmuch as the influences of the Spirit of God are not confined to them who enjoy revelation, but are promised in the gracious covenant made with mankind at the fall to all who are sincere, a heathen by these influences may attain the faith just now described, and thereby may please God. For faith is more a work of the heart than of the understanding. So that, although the persons to whom revelation is denied, may not have the same objects of belief with those who enjoy revelation, they may have the same spirit of faith."† Nothing is wanting to this scheme but evidence of its truth, proof that the influences of the Spirit are communicated to heathens, and that faith consists in a sincere desire to know, and a disposition to do, the will of God. Such proof this celebrated theologian has neglected to give. He asserts these things, and then reasons from them, as if they were self-evident, or had been established by a prior demonstration. It is curious to observe, how, having laid down his arbitrary definition of faith, he proceeds with as much confidence as if it were an axiom, to explain by it the Epistle to the Romans, and other passages in the writings of Paul. If you peruse his works with attention, you will find many instances of gratuitous assumption; and indeed there is hardly any author who more freely deals out his *ipse dixit*‡ as argument both in doctrine and in criticism, or who is more remarkable for wresting and misinterpreting the Scriptures. The present hypothesis is a baseless fabric; it is false in all its parts, and is such a barefaced contradiction of the doctrine of the Apostle, as is not surpassed by the most perverse commentary upon his writings.

* Com. on Romans, chap. i. View. † Ib. chap. ii. View.
‡ "He said:" his *say so*.

While I deny, that there is any revelation of grace but in the Scriptures, and any external means of salvation but the word and the ordinances of the Christian religion, I admit, that the dispensations of providence are subservient to God's merciful designs. They can be considered, however, only as subordinate means, operating in concurrence with the word, and having no efficacy without it. By calamities, and dangers, and the prospect of death, men may be awakened to a concern for their souls; but they will not return to God, and obtain the well-grounded hope of future happiness, till their minds are directed to the Scriptures, in which pardon is promised to believers. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* "The grace of faith," says our Confession, "whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the word; by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened."†

The Word of God consists of two principal parts, the Law and the Gospel, which are both employed in the conversion of sinners. "By the law is the knowledge of sin."‡ When it is applied to the conscience, it shows the sinner his depravity and guilt, makes him sensible of his danger while he is under its curse, and convinces him of his utter inability to relieve himself, because he is incapable of obeying its precepts, and of satisfying for his manifold violations of them. These discoveries create an earnest desire for deliverance from the wretchedness of his natural state, and prepare him to accept it when offered to him; but they are calculated in themselves to drive him to despair, and would have this effect if they were alone. But the Gospel comes with its proclamation of mercy, exhibits the Saviour in his fulness of merit and grace, makes a free offer of his salvation to sinners, and calls upon every man to accept the gift of God with gratitude, and in the exercise of faith. It is evident that it is the Gospel which is properly the instrument of conversion, and that the law is only subsidiary, by producing that state of mind in which salvation becomes desirable, and without which it will be regarded with indifference, and the preference given to the transitory interests of the present life. It is by the Gospel that true penitence is awakened, which implies not only the fear of wrath, but the hatred of sin arising from the love of God. The mind is enlightened, the heart is changed, and all those exercises which are called the graces of the Spirit, as faith, and love, and hope, and submission, and a desire for perfection, are excited by its doctrines and promises.

God externally calls men by his word, which is addressed to persons of every nation, of every condition, and of every character. "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."‖ It has been affirmed, indeed, that all men are not the objects of this call, but that it is confined to sensible sinners; by whom are meant persons who have been awakened, and are serious in their desire for salvation. So far, indeed, has this idea been carried, that some have denied that the Gospel should be preached to sinners, as such, in the common acceptation of the word. They will preach it before them, but not to them; that is, they will not offer salvation to them, and invite them to believe. The plainest points of theology have been made the subjects of controversy and misrepresentation. This is one of the refinements of orthodoxy, and has been deduced from high notions respecting the decrees; but it happens to be in direct opposition to many pas-

* Rom. x. 17. † Conf. xiv. 1.
‡ Rom. iii. 20. ‖ Prov. viii. 4. Mark xvi. 15.

sages of Scripture, and particularly to the commission of Christ to the apostles, which was quoted above. I do not approve of the method of some divines, who have endeavoured to explain away those passages of Scripture in which sensible sinners are supposed to be addressed, and to show that the characters by which they are described are applicable to sinners in general. It is the way of disputants, who are more zealous than wise, to make every thing bend to their favourite opinion. Surely we may grant, that awakened sinners are sometimes the objects of the invitations of Scripture, as it would be surprising indeed if no particular notice were taken of them; and, at the same time, we may believe that the offer of salvation is universal. It was a mixed congregation, or rather a congregation composed entirely of unbelievers, (for they were all Jews and proselytes, who then for the first time heard the Gospel,) whom Paul addressed in the following words:—"Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."* After the cure of the lame man in the temple, Peter did not inquire whether those who crowded around him were the elect, or sensible sinners, but said, without hesitation, to the whole multitude, "Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."† To preach the Gospel, is to proclaim pardon through Jesus Christ, to every man who shall believe; and as this is the sense in which it is commonly understood among us, so it will appear, I am persuaded, to every unprejudiced person, to be the Scriptural meaning of it. "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely."‡

God calls men externally by his word. But as the word is preached to all men without distinction, it follows, that he calls many to whom he has purposed not to give salvation. A question, therefore, naturally arises, What is the reason of this procedure, and how can it be reconciled with his sincerity? The difficulty is substantially the same in the system of those who admit that God had a certain knowledge of future events, whether they are followers of Calvin or Arminius. For how shall we account for his conduct, in not only offering salvation to men who he knows will not accept it, but in using the most earnest entreaties, and cogent arguments, to persuade them? I acknowledge that the difficulty, although it presses upon both systems, is greater in that of those who hold the doctrine of absolute and unconditional decrees; because it follows from this doctrine, that God does not intend to bestow salvation on the reprobate; while the others are at liberty to ascribe to him the intention, if they can only reconcile it with the foresight of the event, and explain how, in innumerable cases, it should fail of the effect. Several distinctions have been proposed, in order to throw some light on this dark subject. The external call, it has been said, is extended to the elect and the reprobate in a different manner. It is addressed to the elect primarily and directly, the ministry of the Gospel having been instituted for their sake, to gather them into the church, insomuch that, if none of them remained to be saved, it would cease. It respects the reprobate secondarily and indirectly, because they are mixed with the elect, who are known to God alone, and consequently it could not be addressed to them, without the reprobate being included. This dispensation has been illustrated by rain, which descending upon the earth according to a general law, the final cause of which is the fructification of the soil, falls upon places where it is of no use, as rocks and sandy deserts. Again, it has been said, that the end of the external call may be viewed in a twofold light, as it respects God, and as it respects the call; and these may be distinguished as the end of the worker, and the end of the work. The end of the work, or of the external call, is the salvation of men, because it is the natural tendency of the preaching of the Gospel to lead them to faith and repentance. But this is not the end of the Worker, or God, who does not intend to save all who are called, but those alone to whom he has decreed to give effectual grace. I shall not be surprised to find that these distinctions have not lessened the difficulty in your apprehension. While they promise to give a solution of it, they are neither more nor less than a repetition of it in different words. I shall subjoin only another observation, which has been frequently made, that, although God does not intend to save the reprobate, he is serious in calling them by the Gospel; for he declares to them what would be agreeable to him, namely, that they should repent and believe, and he promises, most sincerely, eternal life to all who shall comply. The call of the Gospel does not show what he has purposed to do, but what he wills men to do. From his promises, his theatenings, and his invitations, it only appears that it would be agreeable to him that men should do their duty, because he necessarily approves of the obedience of his creatures, and that it is his design to save some of them; but the event demonstrates that he had no intention to save them all; and this should not seem strange, as he was under no obligation to do so.

Mr. Burke, in his treatise concerning the sublime and beautiful, has observed, when speaking of the attempt of Sir Isaac Newton to account for gravitation, by the supposition of a subtle elastic ether, that "when we go but one step beyond the immediately sensible qualities of things, we go out of our depth. All we do after, is but a faint struggle, that shows we are in an element which does not belong to us." We may pronounce, I think, these attempts, to reconcile the universal call of the Gospel with the sincerity of God, to be a faint struggle to extricate ourselves from the profundities of theology. They are far indeed from removing the difficulty. We believe, on the authority of Scripture, that God has decreed to give salvation to some, and to withhold it from others. We know, at the same time, that he offers salvation to all in the Gospel; and to suppose that he is not sincere, would be to deny him to be God. It may be right to endeavour to reconcile these things, because knowledge is always desirable, and it is our duty to seek it as far as it can be attained. But if we find that beyond a certain limit we cannot go, let us be content to remain in ignorance. Let us reflect, however, that we are ignorant in the present case only of the connexion between two truths, and not of the truths themselves, for these are clearly stated in the Scriptures. We ought therefore to believe both, although we cannot reconcile them. Perhaps the subject is too high for the human intellect in its present state. It may be, that however correct our notions of the Divine purposes seem, there is some misapprehension which gives rise to the difficulty. In the study of theology, we are admonished at every step to be humble, and feel the necessity of faith, or an implicit dependence upon the testimony of Him who alone perfectly knows himself, and will not deceive us.

When we say that the Word of God is the external instrument of conversion, we must be understood to speak of persons who are capable of knowing and believing it. As infants are not fit subjects of instruction, their regeneration must be effected without means, by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit on their souls. There are adult persons, too, to whom the use of reason has been denied. It would be harsh and unwarrantable to suppose that they are, on this account, excluded from salvation; and to such of them as God has chosen, it may be applied in the same manner as to infants. This is the doctrine of our church: "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth; so also are all other

* Acts xiii. 38. † Ib. iii. 19. ‡ Rev. xxii. 17.

elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word."*

The word of God, which reveals truths so great and interesting, is calculated to illuminate the minds of men, to impress their consciences, and to excite their affections. But often it either entirely fails to produce these effects, or produces them only in such a degree, that no radical and permanent change ensues. We affirm that the Word is the ordinary instrument, but we deny that it is the efficient cause of conversion. We are borne out in this assertion by the express and repeated declarations of Scripture, from which we learn that Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God gives the increase.† Hence we distinguish between the external and the internal call, of which the former extends to all to whom the Gospel is preached, while the latter takes place only in case of the elect. The cause of the difference which we observe in the hearers of the Gospel, of whom some believe, and others reject it, is not free-will, but Divine grace, which works effectually in the former, to will and to do.

This is the doctrine of our church, and, as we shall endeavour to show, is also the doctrine of Scripture. But, as it directly tends to humble the pride of man, to annihilate his pretensions to merit, and to appropriate to God the whole glory of his salvation, it is not palatable to his vitiated taste, and hence it has met with much opposition in ancient and modern times.

Pelagius and his followers maintained that our nature was not corrupted by the fall: that we come into the world in the same state of innocence in which Adam was created; that we have free-will, and are able to do good if we please. According to this system, such a change as we mean by regeneration or conversion is unnecessary. They did, indeed, talk of grace, and Divine assistance in the performance of good works; but these words were used solely in compliment to the phraseology of Scripture, and to impose upon those who might be so simple as to be satisfied with sounds, without inquiring into the sense. When they explained their own meaning, the illusion vanished. "The grace of God, and the assistance which he affords us to preserve us from sinning," says Augustine, "they place either in nature and free-will, or in the law and doctrine; so that when God is said to assist men to shun evil, and to do good, nothing more is meant than that he shows them by revelation what they should do." Thus they admitted only the external call. Men were indebted to God solely for the knowledge communicated by his word, and the exhortations addressed to them in it; the use which was made of these depended entirely on themselves.

In modern times, the doctrine of Pelagius has been adopted by Socinians, and some of the followers of Arminius, who have carried the principles of the sect to the utmost length. With respect to the necessity of Divine grace, and the degree in which it is necessary, there has been a variety of opinions, distinguished by slight shades of difference, which it would be tedious and useless to enumerate. An opinion which has been maintained by many, both Papists and Protestants, is that of sufficient grace, which has been defined to be "grace by which God so calls, excites, and is ready to assist men, in directing, protecting, and co-operating with them, that they are, indeed, able to will, to believe, and be converted, and do good works, although they do not actually will it." It is the same with universal grace, which is so called because it is given to all men. God, who is willing to save all men, has given them sufficient means of faith and repentance; but these means are subject to free-will, which has the power to use this grace or not, to believe or not to believe. Some have gone so far as to maintain, that God was bound by the new covenant to furnish every man with this grace, because otherwise he would have been chargeable with demanding from us what we had not strength to perform.

Similar sentiments are general, and are entertained by many who have not studied the systems in which they are defended, and do not arrange themselves under the standard of Pelagius, or Arminius, or any other heresiarch. They are agreeable to human nature; they seem to arise spontaneously in the mind. It is supposed that we have a power to convert ourselves, not so strong perhaps as it originally was, but still sufficient, especially if we are favoured with proper means and opportunities; that God is ready to assist our sincere endeavours; that, although we must be indebted, in some degree, to his grace, our conversion depends chiefly upon ourselves; and that, if we will only reflect seriously on the subject of religion, and resolve in earnest to forsake our sins, the purposed change will be effected. This doctrine is taught from the press and the pulpit; is received in its most unqualified form, without any doubt of its truth, by the grossly ignorant, who, almost in every place, constitute the majority; and, by some who affect to be more wise, is regarded, when set out in proper phrases, as the pure Gospel of Christ.

In opposition to all the modifications of error upon this subject, we affirm, that conversion is effected by the almighty grace of God; that, although man does not concur in it, he is in the first instance passive, and his concurrence is the consequence of supernatural power communicated to him; and that he does not come to God till he is effectually called by the operations of the Holy Spirit in his soul.

The truth of this doctrine appears from the accounts given in Scripture, of the corrupt state of mankind by nature. They are said to be not only diseased and weak, but "to be dead in trespasses and sins;"* to be not only blind, but "darkness" itself;† to be "natural" or animal men, who "do not receive, and cannot know, the things of the Spirit;"‡ to be "the servants of sin;"‖ to be "the enemies of God,"§ who are not and cannot be subject to his law.¶ Now, if these things are true, how is it possible that men have free-will to good as well as to evil; that they possess a degree of moral power, which, by culture, may increase in strength, so as to change the current of their affections and actions; that with some assistance they can work out their salvation? It is not sufficient to open the eyelids of a blind person, to pour the full blaze of light upon his face; you must remove the impediment of vision, or form the organ anew. It is not sufficient to go to the grave of a dead man, and with a loud voice call upon him to arise; you must bring back his spirit from the invisible regions, and unite it again to his body. It is not sufficient to tell the slave, that his condition is wretched and degraded, and to awaken his natural desire for liberty; you must break his fetters, and rescue him from the power of his oppressor. The situation of the sinner is more hopeless than that of this man; for he is a willing slave, he hugs his chains, he thinks himself already free, and despises the liberty which the Gospel offers, as the most grievous bondage. There is, indeed, a difference between a person physically, and one morally dead. The body in the grave is destitute of all life, and has lost all its energies; while the sinner is still a rational being, and is capable of acts of understanding and will. But he is divested of every moral habit; he cannot discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner, nor choose what is spiritually good, till his natural powers be renovated and invigorated. Hence,

* Conf. chap. x. § 3. † 1 Cor. iii. 6.

* Eph. ii. 1. † Ib. v. 8, etc. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 14.
‖ Rom. vi. 17. § Col. i. 21. ¶ Rom. viii. 27.

"the light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not."* Hence, although commanded and exhorted, and addressed by every argument, to return to the service of God, he refuses, till he be roused and persuaded by something of greater efficacy than the clearest demonstration, and the most impressive oratory which men can employ.

The necessity of almighty grace to the conversion of the soul, is farther evident from the terms which are used to describe its operations, as a creation, a resurrection, a new birth, the taking away of the heart of stone, and the giving of a heart of flesh. Surely something more is implied in such terms, than an external proposal of the truth, or such faint assistance, that it remains in our power to accept or reject it at our pleasure. If the words and phrases employed by the Holy Ghost have any meaning, they import such an exertion of Divine power as was made in bringing all things at first out of nothing, and in raising Lazarus or Christ from the grave; or is still made in the production of organised bodies out of pre-existing materials, and infusing into them a principle of life. How do such expressions agree with the notion, that God merely persuades us, as one man persuades another, by rational arguments; or, that he merely affords us a little help, as we give our arm to a person who is able to walk, but, labouring under a certain degree of weakness, might stagger and fall if he were left alone? How could he be said, upon this supposition, to create us, to raise us from a state of death, to give us a heart entirely new? It would not comport with the wisdom of God, whose design in the Scriptures is to give us just and accurate notions of his dispensations, to use expressions which obviously signify, that the work of converting sinners is wholly his own, while something very different is intended, and the truth is, that they convert themselves. If we would not cast a reflection upon him, as having spoken loosely, and in such a manner as to mislead us, we must conclude that a mighty and uncontrollable power is displayed in the regeneration of the soul. It is no objection, that sinners are commanded to "make" to themselves "a new heart, and a new spirit," to "repent and turn" to the Lord.† One passage of Scripture should be compared and explained in consistency with another; and we must therefore infer, that such commands do not suppose any power in man to obey them, but are intended to point out his duty, to declare, not what he can do, but what he ought to do, and what he will do when God enables him by his grace. Upon this view of such commands, is founded the celebrated saying of Augustine in his Confessions: *Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis*, "Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt."

I may mention, as another proof, all those passages of Scripture which represent divine grace as necessary to the reception of the world; and consequently, the external call as insufficient to accomplish the end. The Psalmist prays, that God would open his eyes, to see wondrous things out of his law ‡ and Paul, that God would give to the Ephesians the spirit of "wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ."‖ These prayers suppose something more than an external proposal of the truth, which David and the Ephesians already enjoyed, and would have been superfluous, if they had possessed, in their own minds, the power of spiritual discernment. Our Saviour is said to have opened "the understandings" of the disciples "to understand the Scriptures;"§ not only to have explained the Scriptures to them, but to have enabled them to apprehend their meaning, by an internal operation on their minds. Lest, however, this passage should be supposed to refer to a miraculous illumination, intended to qualify them for the apostolical office, let me remind you of what is said of Lydia, that the "Lord opened her heart, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul."* There was nothing in her case, which required a peculiar interposition, and we must therefore consider what was done to her, as done to all who are converted. The opening of the heart, or an exertion of divine power upon the understanding and the will, is necessary to dispose men to attend to the Gospel, and to receive it with faith. It is not the word itself which opens the heart, as if nothing more were necessary to conversion than the use of external means; but this is a work of God, distinct from the exhibition of the truth. The opening of the heart signifies the removal of the obstructions, whether arising from the prejudices or the influence of corrupt inclinations, and can be effected only by him, who "makes old things pass away, and all things become new." The distinction between the preaching of the word, and the application of it by divine power, is stated in other passages. "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost."† "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."‡ If ministers are said to be workers together with God, it is only because they perform the external and subordinate office of preaching the word, and administering the other ordinances of religion. It is the Spirit of God who has access to the soul, and "turns it as the rivers of water."

In the last place, I may refer you to those passages of Scripture, which attribute to God an internal and immediate agency upon the soul in conversion, as when he is said to work in us "both to will and to do;"‖ "to fulfil in us the work of faith with power;"§ to work in us "that which is well-pleasing in his sight;"¶ to put his laws within us, and write them in our hearts;** to give us a new heart, and to put a right spirit within us, that we may walk in his statutes, and keep his judgments.†† These expressions cannot be softened down, to mean only that he presents sufficient motives to incline our hearts to obey; or that he affords us such a degree of assistance, as may prove altogether ineffectual. There is an implied contrast between the mode in which men operate upon one another, and the action of God. They propose objects, and endeavour to fix the attention upon them, and to awaken activity by arguments and persuasives; but he moves and changes the heart.

We conclude, from these arguments, that as the external call is by the Word, the internal call is by the Spirit. The persons of the Godhead have each a peculiar province in the work of redemption. As it originated with the Father, on whose love the eternal purpose of saving sinners was founded, and was obtained by the obedience and death of the Son, so it is applied by the Holy Ghost, the author of spiritual wisdom, and faith, and holiness, and consolation. Hence, this office is expressly ascribed to him. He is called "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ."‡‡ God promises, as we have already heard, to "put his spirit within us, that we may walk in his statutes, and keep his judgments, and do them."‖‖ In a word, we are said to be born of the Spirit. "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."§§

When our Lord taught this doctrine to Nicodemus, he did not understand it, and seems to have totally mis-

* John i. v. † Ezek. xviii. 30, 31. ‡ Ps. cxix. 18.
‖ Eph. i. 17. § Luke xxiv. 45.

* Acts. xvi. 14. † 1 Thess. i. 5. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.
‖ Phil. ii. 13. § 2 Thess. i. 11. ¶ Heb. xiii. 21.
** Ib. viii. 10. †† Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.
‡‡ Eph. i. 17. ‖‖ Ezek. xxxvi. 27. §§ John iii. 5.

apprehended the subject, so great was his ignorance of one of the first principles of religion, although he was a teacher among the Jews, or, *the teacher*, by way of eminence, as the original imports, in which he is called ὁ διδάσκαλος. "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"* There is not the same gross misconception among Christians; but many of them wonder as much, when the necessity of regeneration is asserted, and may be addressed in the words of our Saviour, —"Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."† No man will wonder at the doctrine, who believes upon the authority of Scripture, and is convinced by experience, that human nature is wholly depraved. Admitting this principle, he will perceive that men must undergo a radical change, to qualify them for entering into the kingdom of heaven, and that it can be effected only by the almighty power of God. The doctrine gives rise to no dispute among those who are awakened to a just sense of their moral condition by nature. As they rejoice that God has promised to renew us after his image, and has for this purpose sent the spirit of grace, so it is their earnest prayer, that they may be the subjects of his operations, and thus be enabled to love and serve their Creator and Redeemer. The doctrine is opposed by cold hearted speculatists, by men full of prejudice and lofty notions of the dignity of human nature, who will not stoop to be absolute debtors to divine grace. Hence they make every effort, by wresting the Scriptures, and by an apparatus of sophistical arguments, to reserve to themselves, wholly, or in part, the glory of conversion, if they admit that there is such a thing. But all things are of God in redemption, as well as in creation. Every good thought, every devout emotion, every holy action, is the effect of his grace; for "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."‡

Nothing is a clearer proof of the alienation of man from God, than his reluctance to receive this doctrine, and others of a similar nature. The idea which we should naturally form of a holy and devout creature is, that he would feel his obligations to his Maker as benefits; that, with ineffable pleasure, he would render the due return of gratitude and praise for favours already conferred; and that, if I may speak so, he would open his soul to receive new communications of his goodness. But man, blinded by prejudices, elated with pride, admiring himself, and seeking his own glory, would break all the ties of dependence, and be the artificer of his own fortune in this world, and in the next. We cannot conceive an angel in heaven to be actuated by such sentiments and feelings; to balance accounts with his Creator, and to settle how much he owes to himself, and how much to the author of his being. This strange procedure is reserved for our world where the most helpless of all creatures, through a singular infatuation, boast of their powers; and, when the arm of Omnipotence is stretched out to assist them, deem their honour engaged scornfully to reject its aid. Such is the conduct of those who cavil at the doctrine of regenerating grace, and labour to prove, by an array of what they deem rational arguments, that man can attain, by his own efforts, the moral excellence which the Scripture pronounces to be the gift of Heaven.

LECTURE LXVI.

ON THE APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION.

Farther Observations on the Spirit's Agency in Conversion—Divine Grace, its Mode of Operation and its Invincibility—Its Effect, Regeneration—The Change Implied in Regeneration, Illumination of the Mind and Renovation of the Will—Consequences.

THE application of redemption commences with the call of God, by which sinners are brought from a state of nature into a state of grace. This call is external by the gospel, in which salvation is offered to them, and they are invited and commanded to receive it; and internal by the Spirit, who persuades and enables them to comply. The former is ineffectual without the latter, as we showed from the corruption of human nature, which has sunk into a state of complete spiritual disability, and from the express and varied language of Scripture, which ascribes our conversion to the power of God, and represents its influence upon our minds and hearts as indispensably necessary to our cordial reception of the truth.

The many passages to which we referred obviously teach, that the true cause of the efficacy of the external means is, the invisible power of God silently influencing the soul. Unless the Scriptures were intended to mislead us by the use of figurative and hyperbolical language, which means much less than meets the ear, or means something very different from what the terms naturally suggest, there can be no doubt that our doctrine is legitimately deduced from them. It may be asked in what other manner the inspired writers would have expressed themselves, if it had been their acknowledged intention to teach that, besides the external call of the word, there is necessary the internal call of the Spirit, and that this consists in an exertion of power, the object of which is not merely to assist us, as if we possessed a certain degree of strength, but to perform the whole work, and to leave us only the office of concurring in its progress? Would they have made use of any other terms, or, in the whole compass of their vocabulary, could they have found terms more appropriate to their design, or which would have more definitely pointed out the exclusive operation of Omnipotence? What more could any person have said, who intended to signify that the spiritual change of the soul is the work, not of himself, but of God, than to call this change a creation out of nothing, and a resurrection from the dead?

We have seen that, notwithstanding the explicit testimony of Scripture, many attempts have been made to assign to men an important agency in the application of redemption. Pelagius, who denied original sin, attributed it wholly to ourselves, and spoke of Divine grace only in deference to the phraseology of Scripture, and in compliance with the common language of Christians. When he said that God enlightens us by his heavenly grace, he meant nothing more than that he has given an external revelation. All are followers of Pelagius, who maintain that man is by nature possessed of a power to comply with the call of the gospel. Some talk of sufficient grace, and others of concursive grace, understanding in fact the same thing, namely, an ability given to all men to believe, so that those who do actually believe are not more indebted to God than unbelievers, but may take praise to themselves for having made a better use of their power: in direct opposition to Scripture, which declares that it is not of him that willeth, but of God that showeth mercy.

We shall not be surprised at the attempts which have been made to bring forward man, as in whole or in part, the author of his salvation, if we reflect upon the pride of his heart, which prompts him, like our first parents, to aspire to be a God, possessing not only the knowledge of good and evil, but also the power to do the one as well as the other. To gratify this principle, Scripture is tortured and perverted, and is made to speak a language most foreign to its obvious design, and to the unquestionable sentiments of the writers. We may remark also in this, as in other cases, the un-

* John iii. 4. † Ib. 7. ‡ Eph. ii. 10.

happy influence of philosophy, falsely so called, upon the doctrines of revelation. The sentiments of the ancient sects of philosophers have been introduced into Christianity, and have produced the unhallowed compound of what is called rational theology. The power of man to make himself virtuous was held by them all: many professed disciples of Christ have chosen rather to adopt their proud and presumptuous conclusions, than to acquiesce in his humiliating lessons. When some divines talk of the human heart as the true source of virtue, and of the necessity of its originating in our independent choice, that it may possess the nature of virtue, we seem to be listening to a philosopher of the Porch, who described his good man as superior to the gods, because the latter were virtuous by nature, while the virtue of the former was derived from himself.

When we ascribe conversion to the grace of God, it is necessary to ascertain the meaning of the term *grace*, which, in Scripture, bears a variety of senses. It sometimes signifies the free favour of God, or his unmerited love, considered as the source of our salvation, and of all our blessings and privileges: "Who hath saved us, and called us according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."* It signifies again the gospel, in which the love of God is revealed, and by which the blessings flowing from it are communicated. This is the saving grace of God, which "hath appeared to all men,"† and the grace of God which we are exhorted "not to receive in vain."‡ Lastly, the term is used to denote the operation of Divine love upon the soul, as when Paul says, "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain."‖ It is in this sense that we speak of the grace of God, when we call it the efficient cause of the conversion of sinners.

In speaking of spiritual things, we are often under the necessity of employing terms originally intended to express material objects, and we are always in danger of tranferring to the former, ideas borrowed from the latter. The grace of God is sometimes spoken of, and sometimes probably conceived, as if it were something substantial, something distinct from, and inherent in the soul, like a portion of matter mingled with another, by which its qualities are corrected or changed. But it is manifest, upon the slightest reflection, that such notions are improper when applied to a spiritual subject. The grace of God must be understood to signify simply his power freely exerted to produce a change in the moral state of the soul, or, by a metonymy, the change itself, the name of the cause being given to the effect.

It is not contrary to the analogy of nature, that the grace of God, as denoting the exertion of his power upon the soul, should be employed in the conversion of sinners. It is certain, from reason as well as from the express declarations of Scripture, that creatures are dependent upon their Maker for the continuance of their existence, and the exercise of their faculties. As the various parts of creation are linked together, and afford each other mutual support; as the heavens fertilize the earth, the earth supplies its inhabitants with food, its inhabitants propagate their kind, rear their offspring, and co-operate for the purposes of society; so the whole system is supported by the providence of God, as the Heathens acknowledged, when they represented it as suspended from the throne of Jupiter by a golden chain, and his energy as the primary cause of its movements. It is no objection that we cannot explain the manner in which God acts upon his creatures, if the fact is certain, that it is owing to his constant influence that we live, and think, and will, and move our limbs, and perform all our bodily and mental functions. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." There is no such difference between this case and the conversion of sinners, that we should hesitate to concede in the one what we admit in the other. If the influence of Providence in upholding, exciting, and directing us, is not destructive of our rational nature, I should wish to know upon what ground the influence of grace, in giving us new moral inclinations and habits, is supposed to be subversive of it. The operation of the power of God in regeneration, may be considered as of the same kind with its operation in providence, although it is exerted for a different purpose. Some, indeed, may choose to say that it is of a different kind, lest we should confound nature and grace, and represent grace only as nature carried to a higher degree of perfection. But this danger is imaginary. There are two powers in God; but his energy is one, and is distinguished by the objects on which, and the ends for which, it is exerted. It is the same power which creates, and upholds in existence: the same power which forms a stone and a sunbeam; the same power which gives vegetable life to a tree, animal life to a brute, and rational life to a man. In like manner, it is the same power which assists us in the natural exercise of our faculties, and enables us to exercise them in a spiritual manner. Hence it does not appear that there is any reasonable ground on which we should reject the doctrine of regenerating grace, any more than the doctrine of providential influence.

That the grace of God, in the application of redemption, is mighty, may be inferred from the effect. It is a change of the whole man, of his views, and principles, and inclinations, and pursuits. Now, this is a change which no means merely human have ever been able to accomplish. Not to mention the total failure of philosophy to reform mankind, or even in a single instance to inspire true virtue, we may remark, that the superior instructions, and precepts, and motives of Christianity, although employed with great diligence and earnestness, prove so often ineffectual, as to convince every person of reflection, that when they do take effect, their success should be attributed to a higher cause than their intrinsic excellence, or the eloquence of the teachers. The hand of God is clearly seen in the sudden, commanding, and lasting impressions which are often made upon the mind. When the thoughtless are compelled to think, and to think with an intenseness and seriousness which they never formerly felt; when the careless are in a moment affected with a sense of their most important interests: when the lips which were accustomed to blaspheme, learn to pray; when the proud assume the lowly attitude and language of the penitent; when those who were devoted to the world, give evidence that now the object of their desires and pursuits is a heavenly inheritance; and when this revolution, so wonderful, has been effected by the simple word of God, and by the word which the subjects of this change had often heard before unmoved, we must be convinced that some mighty influence has been exerted, and that that influence is divine. Here, if anywhere, we perceive the finger of God. Hence his power is represented as displayed in the success of the Gospel; "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."*

The power of God, exerted in the regeneration and conversion of sinners, is invincible. I make use of this term rather than the word irresistible, because, when the latter is taken in its natural import, it does not express what is the fact. Resistance *is* made to the grace of God, not only by the finally impenitent, but also by those who ultimately yield to it. In particular, when they begin to feel convictions of sin, they often endeavour to suppress them, or resort to improper expedients for relief; "going about," for exam-

* 2 Tim. i. 9. † Tit. ii. 11. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 1. ‖ 1 Cor. xv. 10.

* Ps. cx. 2, 3.

ple, "to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God."* In these instances, they are chargeable with opposition to grace. Those, therefore, who speak of irresistible grace, mean that it cannot be finally resisted; that it will overcome all the efforts of corrupt nature to counteract its design; and that it will ultimately render sinners obedient to the faith. But this idea is more properly expressed by the term, invincible. Man must submit in the end to the power of God; and this will be the more evident, if we consider that his power is not only sufficient to compel the most refractory to yield, although with the greatest reluctance, but that it can take away the spirit of opposition, and so influence the hearts of men, that this submission shall be voluntary.

Were we to say that the grace of God is not invincible, we should be under the necessity of adopting the opinion, which we have already proved to be unscriptural, that there is a power in man to comply or not to comply with the call of the Gospel. We should take the work of conversion out of the hand of God, and commit it to man himself. After God had done all that he could do for our salvation, it would depend upon ourselves whether the intended effect should follow. Hence the result of the dispensation of the Gospel would be altogether uncertain. It would not be known beforehand whether all would believe, or all would disobey. If the grace of God was effectually resisted in one case, it might be effectually resisted in every case; and, consequently, although Christ shed his blood that he might bring sinners to God, and the whole economy of grace has been instituted with a view to carry the design of his death into effect, it might happen that not an individual of the human race would be saved. The very possibility of such an issue, by which the scheme of redemption would be frustrated, furnishes a strong presumption in favour of the doctrine, that the grace exercised in the conversion of sinners is not of such an equivocal character, that it may or may not accomplish its design, but that its operation is mighty and efficacious, bearing down all opposition, and "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

The great objection against the invincibility of Divine grace is, that it is subversive of the liberty of the will. It seems inconceivable to some, that a man should be free, and at the same time should be infallibly determined to a particular purpose. But, the objection proceeds upon a misapprehension of the mode of operation. The idea occurs of external force, by which a man is compelled to do something to which he is averse. It is not considered that the power of grace is not compulsive; that it puts no force upon our minds; that, instead of disturbing our mental constitution, it goes along with it; and that, in a manner at once natural and supernatural, it secures the concurrence of the will. True liberty consists in doing what we do, with knowledge and from choice; and such liberty is not only consistent with conversion, but essential to it; for if a man turn to God at all, he must turn with his heart; God does not lead us to salvation without consciousness, like stones transported from one place to another; nor without our consent, like slaves who are driven to their task by the terror of punishment. He conducts us in a manner suitable to our rational and moral nature. He so illuminates our minds, as we shall afterwards see, that we most cordially concur with his design. His power, although able to subdue opposition, is of the mildest and most gentle kind. While he commands, he persuades; while he draws, the sinner comes without reluctance: and never in his life is there a freer act of volition than when he believes in Christ, and accepts of his salvation.

It is an important question on this subject, whether a sinner is merely passive in the first moment of his conversion, or his will co-operates with the grace of God? It will facilitate the answer to it, if we distinguish between regeneration and conversion. Those who, with Pelagius, deny original sin, and maintain that there is no depravity in us, but what has been contracted by our own acts, make regeneration to consist in a voluntary change and reformation of life; and therefore hold that man is a worker with God from the commencement of it. Indeed, according to this scheme, God merely commands him to reform, and he obeys by his own power. But, according to the Scriptures, regeneration is a change effected by *divine grace* in the state of the soul, the supernatural renovation of its faculties, the infusion of a principle of spiritual life. It is evident that, if this is a just definition, the sinner is passive; for, till divine grace is exerted upon him, he is incapable of moral activity, and, in the language of inspiration, is "dead in trespasses and sins." He is in the same situation with a man who is literally dead, and who, when lying in the grave, cannot contribute in any degree to the restoration of his life. He is like Lazarus, who had no concern in his own resurrection, knew not that our Saviour had come to his sepulchre to deliver him from death, and could not have obeyed the voice which called upon him to come forth, if the power which accompanied it had not brought back his spirit from the invisible world, and re-united it to his body. Regeneration is the effect of preventing grace, or of grace which precedes our endeavours, and operates alone. Conversion is the turning of the soul to God, and is expressed by our seeking the Lord, our coming to him, our forsaking our evil ways, and turning to him, and by other phrases which import activity, and allude to the motion of the body in changing its place. It obviously implies the exercise of repentance and faith, the love of God, and the choice of his service; and these are positive acts of the soul. In this view, the sinner co-operates with the grace of God. He does not aid grace, or render it effectual by the exertion of his own natural power, but he yields to it, goes along with it, and works under its influence. Let it be carefully observed that, while we say that the sinner, although passive in regeneration, is active in conversion, we do not ascribe to him any independent activity, or represent any part of the work as properly his own. His province consists solely in concurrence. He acts because he has been acted upon. The motion of his soul towards God is the effect of the Spirit of life, who has entered into him, as the motion of the body is the effect of his inward thoughts and volitions. His conversion is, therefore, wholly of grace, that is, to grace are owing both the power to turn to God, and the actual exercise of that power; and his own convictions on this subject accord with the sentiments of Paul, who says, "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me."*

Regeneration, I have said, is a change of the moral state of the soul, a renovation of all its faculties. It constitutes the sinner a new creature, not in respect of his essence, but of his views, and habits, and inclinations. It is the introduction of a new and powerful principle into the soul, under the influence of which its natural faculties are exerted in a different manner from that in which they were formerly employed; and in this sense, "old things pass away, and all things become new."† Its thoughts are new, the objects of its choice are new, its aims and motives are new; and by this internal revolution, the external de-

* Rom. x. 3.

* 1 Cor. xv. 10. † 2 Cor. v. 17.

portment is affected. The infusion of divine grace, like the ingrafting of a tree, alters, if I may speak so, the quality of the soul; so that, instead of the sour and crabbed fruits which it formerly produced, it now yields fruit of the most excellent kind, acceptable to God and to men. The instrument of the change, as we have already observed, is the Word of God; and the agent is his Spirit, who, moving as in the beginning of time upon the dark and turbulent mass, reduces it to order.

The first effect of divine power in the new, as in the old creation, is light. The regeneration of the soul commences with the illumination of the mind. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* When our Saviour gave Paul a commission to the Gentiles, he sent him "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."† By the same means his own conversion was accomplished; for he tells us, that "when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood."‡ This, indeed, must be the mode of procedure in every conversion, because God will always act upon us according to the nature which he has given us; and his purpose being to make us willing and obedient, there is no way in which it can be accomplished, but by the communication of clear and impressive views of truth to the mind. The Scriptures are a perfect revelation of the will of God, containing all the doctrines which we are required to believe, and all the precepts which we are bound to obey. But, although their instructions are full, plain, at least with respect to every essential point, and admirably fitted to arrest the attention and engage the heart, yet the human mind is so blinded by prejudices, so captivated and misled by the illusions of sense, and the maxims of worldly wisdom, that it either rejects the information which they bring, or contents itself with a cold and careless assent to it. An unrenewed man may have perused the Scriptures, and may have acquired such distinct notions of the subjects of which they treat, as to be qualified to be a teacher of others, but at the same time he does not perceive their real excellence, nor experience their spiritual efficacy. Hence it is evident that, while he remains under this mental incapacity, the intended effect of the word will not be produced, and that an operation is necessary, analogous to that performed upon the eyes of a blind man to admit the rays of light, or upon the eyes of a man whose vision is imperfect, to enable him to see objects distinctly.

The illumination of the mind does not consist in the discovery of unknown truths. To represent this as the design of it, would be derogatory to the fulness of the Scriptures, and would furnish those who are not converted, with the apology, that they do not possess adequate means, if there were some truths necessary to be known, which are not contained in written revelation. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;"‖ that is, it is sufficient for conversion as an external mean, and there is no defect which needs to be supplied. Enthusiasts may talk of dreams and visions, and revelations, but every sober-minded Christian can trace all his spiritual perceptions, and holy tempers, and devout feelings, to the records of the apostles and prophets; and if he was first awakened, or has been since impressed by the words of men, the sentiments which they conveyed were agreeable to the Scriptures, and were derived from them.

The illumination, therefore, of which we speak, consists in enabling those who are the subjects of it, to apprehend, in their true sense and importance, truths which they find in their Bibles, and which they may have often read before, without being affected by them, because there was "a veil upon their hearts." It is impossible to explain how this change of views is effected, because we know not the way of the Spirit; and impossible to make it intelligible to any man who has not experienced it. No person ever succeeded in an attempt to give a blind man an idea of colours. The regenerated themselves cannot tell how they were illuminated, or make others understand the specific difference between their present and their former conceptions. They may assure them that their views of truth were once obscure and uninteresting, and now are clear and enlivening; but such information is general, and indefinite. One thing, however, they know, that whereas they were blind, now they see.

The sinner is enlightened in the knowledge of his own character and state; that, sensible of his guilt, and wretchedness, and danger, he may be prepared to accept the offers of mercy; in the knowledge of the love, and grace, and compassion of God, that he may be disposed to return to him, instead of hating, and dreading, and avoiding his presence; in the knowledge of Christ, of his substitution, and righteousness, and fulness, that he may trust in him for the supply of his wants, and, believing in him, may be restored to the favour of God. His views, indeed, upon all subjects are changed. He now is convinced of the evil of sin; he now feels the vanity of the world; he now appreciates the value of time; he now perceives the excellence of holiness; he now forms a just estimate of the realities of the invisible state. Divine illumination leads him to view things as they are, whereas he formerly contemplated them through the false medium of prejudice and misconception. He awakes, as from a dream, and finds himself surrounded with the solemn and interesting objects of religion. All Christians are "renewed in knowledge, after the image of him who created them." "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."*

Having seen the effect of divine grace upon the intellectual part of our nature, let us proceed to consider the change on our moral and active principles. In giving an account of regeneration, it is usually observed, that the illumination of the understanding is followed by the renovation of the will. To renew the will is to incline it to good, to render it conformable to the will of God. This change is necessary, because the will is naturally rebellious, and its practical language is, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" It is, therefore, said, that "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;"† and how this is done we learn from an apostle: "It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."‡

The renovation of the will may be considered as the natural consequence of the illumination of the understanding. While we speak of different faculties of the soul, we should reflect that, strictly, these are only different modes in which the soul exerts itself. The understanding is the soul apprehending and contemplating; the will is the soul choosing or refusing; good is the object of its choice; and in order to secure a right determination, nothing more seems to be necessary than that the object should be presented in such a light, as to obtain the deliberate and final decision of the understanding in its favour. Yet we remember the words of the poet, and their truth is too often confirmed by our personal experience.

Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor.‖

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Acts xxvi. 18. ‡ Gal. i. 16.
‖ Ps. xix. 7.

* Col. iii. 10. Eph. v. 8. † Ps. cx. 3. ‡ Phil. ii. 13.
‖ I see and approve the better conduct, but I practise the worse.

But although the heart may oppose, and often does oppose, slight and transient convictions of truth and duty, it does not follow that it will act the same part, when the evidence is full and irresistible, or when the word comes "in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power." As the understanding was intended to be the leading faculty of the soul, it may be conceived, when illuminated by divine grace, actually to lead it in that train and order which is pleasing to God. However, since we do not know how he acts upon the soul, nor to what extent his influence is necessary, it is more modest to avoid determining whether his agency upon the will is mediate or immediate, and to rest in the declarations of Scripture, that "he puts his Spirit within us, and gives us a new heart, a heart of flesh."*

The effect of regenerating grace extends to every power of the soul, and all its movements are controlled by it. The affections have been considered by some as various modifications of the will; but whatever philosophical theory we adopt with respect to them, they are all influenced by the change. They are refined, regulated, and directed to their proper objects. New feelings and emotions, new tendencies and exercises, are the native consequences of the new views of divine things, which have been communicated to the mind. The revelation of the Saviour in his righteousness and grace, accompanied as it is with a heartfelt sense of guilt, and wretchedness, and helplessness, gives rise to faith, or that act of the soul by which it receives his offered salvation, trusts in him for acceptance with God, and finds peace, and hope, and joy, in the contemplation of his character and work. Repentance is the effect of a clear and impressive apprehension of the infinite purity of the Divine nature, to which sin stands opposed as darkness is to light; of the goodness of God, whom it has offended and dishonoured; and of his mercy in Christ, the serious consideration of which is sufficient to melt the hardest, and to subdue the most stubborn heart. Godly sorrow for sin, hatred of it, prayers for deliverance from it, a purpose instantly to forsake it, and the commencement of a course of resistance and mortification, are the ingredients or the fruits of repentance. The dislike of the human heart to God flows partly from misconceptions of his character, and partly from its own corrupt inclinations. Both are removed in regeneration, when the mind is enlightened, and the will is renewed. How is it possible that that man should not love God, to whom he appears the most amiable of all beings, and who is tasting that he is gracious? It would be tedious to give an enumeration of the emotions and affections which are excited in the heaven-born soul. All the fruits of the Spirit are produced, all his graces are imparted, and the heart of man, which was lately like a wilderness, overgrown with briers and thorns, is transformed into the garden of the Lord.

In treating of regeneration, it is strictly necessary to direct our attention only to the change which takes place in the state of the mind. It is here that grace operates, and here that the holy principles which it produces reside. But the seed being sown, the fruit will speedily appear. Reformation is not regeneration, but it will always be the result of it, when the conduct has been previously irregular: for "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."† The Corinthians were adulterers, fornicators, idolaters, covetous, and extortioners, before God called them by his grace; but they were "washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."‡ A change will even take place in the deportment of the most moral unconverted man, as soon as he is born from above. There are no gross sins, we will suppose, from which he needs to be purified; but he will become more spiritual in his conversation, more attentive to religious and relative duties, less eager in pursuit of the world, more scrupulous in the selection of his company, more cautious in avoiding the occasions of sin and appearances of evil. The eye of an attentive and practised spectator will perceive, notwithstanding his former fair show, that even he is become a new man. But it is in the secret recesses of his breast that he will be himself deeply conscious of the spiritual revolution. He will be sensible of a new temper of mind, or a new feeling, as it may be called, in the performance of his duty; for whereas it was formerly a drudgery, it will now constitute his highest pleasure. Engaged in the service of God, he will find himself in his proper element; and instead of confining himself to the narrow round of duties in which he moved, while his sole aim was to maintain a decent appearance, or to silence the clamours of conscience, he will labour to be extensively useful to others, and unweariedly active for the glory of God. The praise of man is no longer the motive which stimulates his activity; another, of a purer and more exalted kind, has assumed its place; a desire for the approbation of his Maker. A reference to God in all his thoughts and actions, a regard to his authority, and love, compounded of esteem, gratitude, and desire for his favour and presence, are the principles by which he is governed. There is a lofty elevation of sentiment and affection above the standard of nature, however carefully improved. He is still in the world, but he is no longer of it; and although he attends to its affairs, and feels joy or sorrow from its changes, he gives the decided and habitual preference to nobler objects, and, like the ancient sojourners in Canaan, whose faith we are exhorted to follow, declares plainly, that he is seeking a country, even a heavenly one.*

Regeneration is specifically the same in all who are the subjects of it; a spiritual change, the transformation of the soul into the image of God: "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit."† But, although every regenerated person is a new creature, and possesses all the constituent parts of the new nature, it is not necessary to maintain that, to all, the same measure of grace is communicated. They may differ from each other as children do at their natural birth, some of whom are much more lively and vigorous than others. Even at the commencement, God, according to his sovereign pleasure, may give more ample knowledge, stronger faith, and all the other virtues in a maturer state, to this man than to that. But there is no difference in respect of their state; the same work has been performed in them all, and they are all partakers of "that one Spirit."

A change from darkness to light, and from sin to holiness, is necessary, not only to those who, having been educated in a false religion, must adopt new views and principles of action before they can be received into the communion of the church, and to those who, having lived long in the practice of vice, and acquired depraved habits, must reform before they can be acknowledged as Christians, but to all the descendants of Adam, whatever may have been their external advantages, and their previous character. No opinion is more unscriptural, than that there are some men who do not need to be regenerated. They may be well instructed in the principles of religion, and may be devout and virtuous in the estimation of the world; they may observe divine ordinances, be just in their dealings, sober in their personal deportment, and distinguished by their deeds of beneficence. Such, how-

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26. † John iii. 9. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

* Heb. xi. 13—16. † John iii. 6.

ever, were the Pharisees, whom our Saviour condemned with severity; and it was in reference to them, and to other persons who resemble them, that he reminded us that the outside of the cup may be clean, while within it is full of impurity. Human nature is the same in all men, although it is subject to various modifications from education, and temper, and the circumstances in which individuals are placed. Whether gentle or fierce, placable or unmerciful, licentious or temperate, selfish or benevolent, it is, according to the testimony of Scripture, carnal, alienated from God, and full of enmity against his law. The mildest and most amiable of mankind, therefore, stands in need of regenerating grace; and if he has not experienced its influence, is only a nominal Christian. With the aid of external advantages, he himself may change his conduct, but Divine grace alone can change his heart. Strange as this doctrine may seem to those who have studied the writings of philosophers more than the Bible, and mortifying as it is to our pride, it is unquestionably true. Our Lord made no exception when he said, "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* It is worthy of attention, that these words were addressed to a man who had received the circumcision of the flesh, had been brought up in the true religion, and was of so respectable a character, that he had been elevated to the rank of a ruler of the Jews. Hence it follows, that no man can be a disciple of Christ, unless he have undergone this spiritual change: "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature;"† but, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."‡

The change effected in the souls of men by regenerating grace, is the foundation of all their subsequent attainments in religion. I mean, that they are effects or consequences of it, as the growth of a vegetable, the rising of the stem, the formation of the buds and flowers, the opening of the leaves and blossoms, and the concoction of the fruit, are the effects or consequences of the living principle in the seed. Hence an apostle, having represented true Christians as the circumcision, or the regenerated, proceeds to state, that "they worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."‖ To the performance of certain functions, certain powers are necessary; and there are properties belonging to one nature which no man expects to find in another. An animal without wings could not fly, without legs could not walk, without eyes could not see, without intellect could not understand. We never look for the peculiar properties of one species of animals in another; we never look, for example, for speech and reasoning among brutes. All the actions of a living being, and all its improvements, bear a relation to the nature originally given to it by its Maker. These things are obvious, not only to philosophers, but to every person of common sense; yet, although just reasoning requires that we should transfer them to religion, men often proceed in a different manner. Religion manifestly implies a different train of sentiments, and feelings, and actions, from those which are brought into operation by the ordinary business of life. Yet many imagine that, because man has understanding, and will, and affections, is capable of managing his worldly affairs, and of performing the duties incumbent upon him as a member of society, he is fully qualified to answer the demands of religion, and requires only to have his attention directed to it, and to be roused to the exercise of his powers. It is taken for granted, that religion is one of the original principles of our nature, which it is sufficient to direct and strengthen by discipline. It is supposed that men have a natural capacity or disposition for religion, and may be trained to habits of piety and virtue by external means. Amidst these speculations, the doctrine of human depravity is forgotten or denied, and hence it is not considered that, to attempt to educe religion from our nature as it is, is as absurd as to attempt to elicit the operations of intellect from an irrational animal. Holy actions must proceed from holy principles, and these must be created in the soul, which, since the fall, is barren of all good. Men must be regenerated before they can make progress in religion, or perform a single action which the Searcher of hearts will approve.

There are two states, in either of which every man is,—the one carnal, and the other spiritual; and his actions correspond to his state. The knowledge of a carnal man, is a cold light glimmering in his mind; his prayers are the service of the lips, or have only such animation as they derive from his natural fears and hopes; his praises are equally defective; his hearing of the Gospel is without faith, and his communicating without penitence and love; his obedience is a form without the substance. Every thing is the reverse in the case of the spiritual man; into whose duties, at least when his frame is good, there are infused the energies of a heart sanctified and moved by the spirit of grace. He prays and praises, and does all things in the Holy Ghost; he makes advances in holiness, and "his path is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."*

These two states are essentially different; there is not a single point in which they meet, or touch each other. They are both predicable of human beings; but while the natural endowments of their respective subjects are the same in kind, their moral qualities are of opposite classes. The one is represented as in a state of non-existence, the other is in a state of being; and the change which has been effected upon the latter is called a creation. In the one state, men are dead, like those who are lying in the grave; in the other, they are alive, like those who were re-animated by our Saviour in the land of Judea, or like the saints at the last day, who will exchange corruption for incorruption. There may be an error in the conclusion which individuals draw with respect to themselves, and, from various causes, they may be unable to ascertain their own character with exactness; but between those who have, and those who have not, experienced regenerating grace, there is a radical distinction, and by the omniscient Judge they are never confounded. "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness."†

* John iii. 5. † 2 Cor. v. 17. ‡ Rom. viii. 9. ‖ Phil. iii. 3.

* Prov. iv. 18. † 1 John v. 19.

LECTURE LXVII.

ON THE UNION OF BELIEVERS TO CHRIST.

Union of Believers to Christ formed in Regeneration—Its Nature illustrated—It is real; spiritual; without confusion of persons; and indissoluble—Its Effects.

The design of God in calling sinners by his word and spirit, is to bring them to himself by Jesus Christ, who is the only mediator between God and men, "the way, the truth, and the life." As it is for his sake that God bestows the blessings of salvation upon us, so, according to his constitution, they can be enjoyed only in a state of connexion with him. This connexion, which is formed in regeneration, it shall be the business of the present lecture to explain.

There are two kinds of union between Christ and his people—a legal union, and a spiritual, or, as it is some-

times called, a mystical union. The reason of the latter denomination is, that the union is obscure or mysterious; but the term is not discriminative, because there are other unions to which it may be applied with equal propriety, as the union of the three persons in the Godhead, and the union of the two natures of our Saviour. Notwithstanding, however, the generality of the term, its meaning is understood in theology, and it may continue to be used as custom has defined and limited it.

The legal union is that which was formed between Christ and his people, when he was appointed their federal head. It is a union in law, in consequence of which he represented them, and was responsible for them; and the benefit of his transactions redounds to them. It may be illustrated by the case of suretyship among men. A relation is formed between a surety and the person for whom he engages, by which they are thus far considered as one, that the surety is liable for the debt which the other has contracted, and his payment is held as the payment of the debtor, who is *ipso facto* absolved from all obligation to the creditor. A similar connexion was established between our Redeemer and those who are given to him by his Father. He became answerable for them to the justice of God; and it was stipulated that, on account of his satisfaction to its demands, they should receive the pardon of their sins. Neither could their sins have been imputed to him, nor could his righteousness have been imputed to them, if they had not been one in the eye of the law.

But something farther was necessary to the actual enjoyment of the benefits of his representation. God, on whose sovereign will the whole economy of grace is founded, had determined not only that his Son should sustain the character of their surety, but that a real, as well as a legal, relation should take place between them, as the foundation of communion with him in the blessings of his purchase. It was his will that, as they were one in law, they should be also one morally or spiritually; that his merit and grace might be imparted to them, as the holy oil poured on the head of Aaron descended to the skirts of his garments.

There are many passages of Scripture in which this connexion with Christ is represented as the foundation of our fellowship with him in spiritual and heavenly blessings. Thus, it is said that, as we were "chosen in him," so we are "accepted in the beloved;" that in him we "obtain an inheritance," and in him "are sealed with the holy spirit of promise;" that the church is his body, "and that we are baptized into Christ;" "that we are all buried with him in baptism," "and are planted in the likeness of his death and resurrection;" that "we are crucified with him," and "live with him," and that "he lives in us;" and that the earnest desire of every believer is to be found in him.* These, and many similar expressions, denote a close relation between the Saviour and his genuine disciples; a relation more intimate than any which may be formed by external bonds.

This will be more evident, if we attend to some of the similitudes by which it is illustrated in Scripture. It is compared to the union between a tree and its branches, which constitute one whole, and possess the same principle of vegetable life: "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."†—It is compared to the union between the building and the foundation by which it is supported: "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones are built up a spiritual house."‡—It is compared to the union between husband and wife, who are one in the eye of the law, and have a mutual interest in the person and property of each other: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church;"* that is, there is a relation between Christ and the church, of which marriage is a figure. This similitude occurs in the forty-fifth Psalm, where our Saviour is represented as the king, and the church as the queen, standing at his right hand, in gold of Ophir.†—It is compared to the connexion of the head and the members of the body, which receive life and nourishment from the head, and are directed and governed by it. "But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."‡ In these similitudes, not only is there a representation of the union of Christ and believers, and of the communion which takes place between them, but it is imported, that he is the primary source of their life, and strength, and perfection.

There are three great unions mentioned in Scripture, which are totally different in kind, and should therefore be carefully distinguished. The first is the union of the persons of the Trinity; but, although the union of which we are now speaking, is compared to it in the following words of our Saviour's prayer, "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us,"‖ yet it is only a general resemblance, consisting in the unity of the members of the body of Christ. The persons of the Godhead have one numerical essence; whereas Christ and believers, in respect of nature, are distinct individuals. The second great union is that which subsists between the two natures of our Redeemer. They are not blended together, but are so closely conjoined, that there is only one person of Christ, and it may be said with truth, that the man is God, and God is man. But there is no such union between him and his people. And this leads me to remark, that the mystical union does not consist in community of essence, or in oneness of person, but in a close relation between different persons. It may be illustrated, but not fully, by the union between a chief or leader, and his faithful and devoted followers, who, although distinct individuals, are engaged in the same pursuits, and are animated by the same spirit, or by the same sentiments and feelings.

It is not fully illustrated, I say, by this, or by any other comparison of a similar kind. Thus, it would be a great mistake to suppose that there is no closer relation between Jesus Christ and his church, than that which subsists between a king and his subjects. This is the only relation which some persons admit. He gives his word, and ordinances, and laws to his people, and they acknowledge his right to govern them, and obey him. But although it should be added, that they feel all the warmth of a sincere attachment to him, yet, according to this opinion, he would be only the political head of the church; and the difference between its relation to him, and that of subjects to their sovereign, would consist solely in the nature of the sentiments and feelings of his followers, which are of a religious kind, and in the superior value of the benefits which they expect to receive from him. The doctrine of Scripture is, that he is the head, not only of government, but of influence; that the ties which connect him and his people are invisible and spiritual; and that the conjunction is so intimate, that he lives in them, and they live in him.

* Eph. i. 4. 6. 11, 13. Col. i. 24. Rom. vi. 3. 4. Col. ii. 12. Rom. vi. 5. 6, 8. Gal. ii. 20. Phil. iii. 9.
† John xv. 5. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 4, 6.

* Eph. v. 31, 32. † Ps. xlv. 9.
‡ Eph. iv. 15, 16. ‖ John xvii. 21.

The bonds of this union are, the Spirit and faith. The Spirit being in him and in them, makes them truly one. The distance between Christ who is in heaven, and believers who are upon earth, is no obstacle, because the Spirit is omnipresent. Through his intervention, not merely a figurative, but a real union is effected; there is one living principle in the head and the members: "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" with him.—"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink of that one Spirit."—"Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us." "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."* There is much more implied in these words than the reception of the gospel, and the formation of a heavenly temper. They import the actual presence and inhabitation of the Spirit himself. The fact is plainly asserted; but it is mysterious, and cannot be distinctly explained. It may be observed, in order to prevent misconception, that the presence of the Spirit with any individual, is not analogous to the presence of one man with another. He who is willing to give his company to another, goes to the place where the other is, and, while associating with him, separates himself from those whom he does not choose to admit to the same intimacy. The coming and inhabitation of the Spirit must be understood in a different manner, because, being a Divine Person, he is omnipresent; and, consequently, as he is incapable of change of place, he cannot withdraw from one man, and approach to another. In respect of his essence, he is as much present with unbelievers as with believers. His dwelling in the latter must therefore signify, that he manifests himself in their souls in a peculiar manner; that he exerts there his gracious power, and produces effects which other men do not experience. Without knowing him, or being aware of his influence, other men are sustained by his power, and enabled to exercise their natural faculties; for we must conceive him to be the source of life and activity throughout the whole intelligent creation; but the regenerated are the subjects of a peculiar work, by which they are transformed into the image of God. We may illustrate his presence with them, as distinguished from his presence with men in general, by supposing the vegetative power of the earth to produce, in the surrounding region, only common and worthless plants, but to throw out, in a select spot, all the riches and beauty of a cultivated garden. By the fruits of the Spirit in the heart and life of an individual, it is known that he is working silently, but powerfully, within him. Where love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith and temperance are found, there he has taken up his abode. In this way we may understand the inhabitation of the Spirit, and it seems to be the only rational idea which we can form of it. It is impossible to conceive any peculiarity in respect of his essential presence in the case of the regenerated, for he necessarily fills all places and all persons. But he works when and where he will, and is said to enter into the soul, when he begins to exert his gracious operations in it, as God is said to come to the assemblies of his people, and to dwell in Zion, because he there manifests his glory, and dispenses the blessings of his grace.

The principal bond of union between Christ and his people, is the Spirit. But, as the union is mutual, something is necessary on their part to complete it; and this is faith. Hence, Christ is said to dwell in our hearts by faith. This faith is not merely a natural act of the mind, assenting to the truth of the gospel, as it assents to any other truth, upon credible testimony; but it is a supernatural act, an effect produced by the power of the Spirit of grace, and is such a persuasion of the truth concerning the Saviour, as calls forth exercises suitable to the nature of its object. It is a cordial approbation of the Saviour, a hearty consent to his offers, an acceptance of him in his entire character, as "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."* Strictly, faith is an act of the understanding alone, and thus logicians would define it; but whatever is the abstract meaning of a term, we should observe whether it is used by a writer in a peculiar sense, and accommodate ourselves to his ideas, instead of rigidly adhering to our own. Here some expounders of the sacred oracles err, and explain them according to the standard of philosophy, instead of allowing them to explain themselves. If we carefully attend to the use of the word faith, in the Scriptures, we shall find that it often signifies more than an assent of the mind, and implies the concurrence of the will, or an exercise of the heart, embracing the truth believed, and trusting in the object revealed. When thus understood, it will appear to be a fit instrument for completing our union to Christ, although it might be difficult to perceive how it could have this effect, if it were merely an assent. The Scriptures, in describing faith, represent it by a variety of bodily motions and actions, to express its activity. It is called "a coming to Christ,"—"a receiving of him,"—"an eating of his flesh, and a drinking of his blood." When man believes with the heart, he obtains an interest in the object of his faith. Christ becomes his, according to the constitution and promise of God. He enters into covenant with him; and while he takes him as his Saviour, he devotes himself to him as one of his people. Thus the union is formed by mutual consent. Our Redeemer expresses his consent, not only in his gracious offers and declarations, but also by sending the Spirit to dwell in his heart, and the Christian expresses consent by his faith. "My Lord and my God," is its language: "Lord, I am thine; save thou me." If we consider the Song of Solomon, as intended to describe this union, and the intercourse founded upon it, the following words of the church are apposite to the present subject—"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."†

From this account, it appears that it is in truth, and not merely by a figure of speech, that Jesus Christ and his disciples are said to be one. They are one, not only in sentiment and affection, by consent of mind and heart, as Nestorius is reported to have explained the union of the two natures of our Saviour, and Socinians the union of the Father and the Son, but by a real conjunction, their persons being united to his person. The reality of the union is manifest from the similitudes by which it is illustrated; for the stones are a part of the building, the branches a part of the vine, and the members a part of the body. The Spirit of Christ actually dwells in the souls of believers, and, by faith, they receive not only the benefits of Christ, but himself. Hence he is said to live in them, and they are said to abide in him. Some men treat the idea of such a union with ridicule; in their opinion, it is a dream of enthusiasm; and they confound it with the wild notions of the mystics, pronouncing what they do not see, and cannot feel, and have not experienced, to be the baseless fabric of a vision. But the humble Christian is content to believe the testimony of Scripture, and cannot withhold his assent to a fact, of which, although he is unable to explain it, the evidence which he finds in himself is conclusive. He who is led by the Spirit, enlightened, assisted, and comforted by him, cannot doubt that Christ dwells in his heart.

Let it be observed, in the next place, that it is a spiritual union. It is on this account that it is difficult to conceive it, and by some it is rejected as imaginary.

* 1 Cor. vi. 17. xii. 13. 1 John iii. 24. iv. 13.

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

† Sol. Song vi. 3.

Influenced as we are by our senses, we are apt to think of it as being the union of two material substances, by juxta-position, or by commixture; or, if we study more refinement, we may suppose it to be only like the union of two friends, in mind and affection. But, as the former union is too gross, so the latter, as we have seen, falls short of the truth. As every corporeal idea should be carefully excluded, so we must elevate our conceptions higher than the most intimate connexion which can be formed between two individuals, by the operations of intellect and will. The same Spirit lives in our exalted Redeemer, and in his people upon earth; and hence, although separated from him, and from one another, they are but one. It may seem strange to illustrate a fact by a mere creation of fancy; but if you should conceive a body composed of many parts, and those parts to be disposed of in different and distant places, but to be animated and moved by the same principle of life, you would have some idea of the union of the members of the church to Christ, and to one another, although dispersed over the face of the earth. In this case, the union would not be local, but spiritual, as it is in the other.

I remark again, that this union is without confusion. It is a union of persons, which imports, that the parties concerned in it, continue as much distinct individuals as before. There is no communication of the properties of one to another; they are, in every respect, what they were, except that the Spirit of Christ, who is in the souls of his people, exerts an influence upon them, by which their moral nature is renewed. Incautious language has been sometimes used in speaking upon this subject. Gregory Nazianzen has employed the two terms θεοποιειν and χριστοποιειν, as if the saints were *deified*, or *christified*. What his meaning was, I pretend not to say; perhaps he intended only to express strongly the closeness of the relation, and the intimacy of the communion founded upon it; but when we do not rigidly adhere to the words of truth and soberness, they mislead others, and suggest false notions to them, into which they were in no danger of falling themselves. Such language prepared the way for the extravagances of the mystics, who, in more modern times, have not scrupled to use the phrases of being "godded in God," and other expressions equally wild. But, although the union is stricter than any human relation, it has its limits, necessarily arising from the nature of the parties. As our Saviour cannot participate in the infirmities of his people, except by sympathy, so they cannot participate in his divine excellences, which are incommunicable. Christ and they are truly united, but there does not result a unity of essence, or of person; for it is not effected immediately, but through the intervention of the Spirit, and, consequently, there is no confusion of nature or persons, so that Christ is incarnate in believers, or they are deified in him.

Lastly, this union is indissoluble. We must not imagine that a man may be in Christ to-day, and out of Christ to-morrow. The union could be dissolved only by his act or by ours. There is no reason to apprehend that he will dissolve it; because he is not fickle in his attachments, apt to be disgusted, and easily irritated, but having a gracious design to accomplish, will persevere till it be completed. Those whom he loves, he loves to the end. It will not be dissolved by any act of his people. They, indeed, have inconstant hearts, and, from their own changeableness, or from the influence of external temptations, they might renounce their connexion with him: but, as he prays that their faith may not fail, so the Spirit, dwelling in their hearts, preserves it amidst the dangers to which it is exposed. There may, indeed, be a temporary apostacy from Christ, in consequence of the decline of grace, or the suspension of the activity of the spiritual principle. We have an example in Peter, who disowned his Master, and disclaimed, with the most solemn asseverations, the character of his disciple. But even then he had not utterly lost faith; and the impressive look by which he was awakened to repentance, as well as the affectionate treatment which he afterwards experienced, showed that, notwithstanding his unworthy conduct, Jesus had not rejected him. We are borne out by the Scripture in maintaining, that the saints cannot fall totally or finally from grace. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* The design of the apostle is not to inform us, that external violence cannot dissolve the union of believers to Christ, for on this point there is no ground of apprehension; but to give an assurance, that it never shall have such influence upon the minds of the saints as to prevail upon them to forsake him. His grace will keep them in the evil hour, and enable them to hold out to the end. "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."† Death will break all other ties, and separate the soul from the body; but this union will not be affected by the fatal stroke. The soul will rise to heaven, and enter into the immediate presence of Christ, to enjoy more intimate fellowship with him, than was permitted in this sublunary state. The body, although lifeless, and corrupted, and reduced to dust, will still be a part of his mystical body. It is united to him even in the grave, as his human nature was united to the divine, notwithstanding the temporary separation of his soul and his body. The saints are said to "die in the Lord," and to "sleep in Jesus;" and ages after their death, God announced himself as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.‡

The sacraments of the new covenant are signs and seals of this union. With respect to baptism, this is evident from the words formerly quoted: "By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body."‖ The subject of which the apostle is speaking, is the union of believers to the body of Christ, and consequently to Christ himself; and while he represents it as effected by the baptism of the Spirit, he unquestionably alludes to the baptism of water as the sign. There is the same reference to this ordinance, when we are said to be "baptised into Christ."§ The sprinkling of water in his name and by his authority, imports the application of his blood, and the communication of his spirit to the soul; in other words, it imports that we are brought into such a relation to him, that we have fellowship with him in the benefits of his death; and of this fellowship union is the basis. We must first be in Christ, before we can be blessed with all spiritual blessings, as the branch must be in the vine, before it can partake of the juice which ascends from the root. The Lord's supper has the same signification. "We are one body," Paul says to Christians, "for we are all partakers of that one bread."¶ Their joint participation of that bread is an emblem of their union, or shows that they compose one holy society, having common feelings and interests. Now, if their fellowship with one another in this ordinance is a token of their union among themselves, it still more clearly demonstrates their union to Christ, as he is exhibited under the sacred symbols, which they take and use. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"** The acts of taking and using the ele-

* Rom. viii. 35, 37. † John x. 28.
‡ Rev. xiv. 13. 1 Thess. iv. 14. Exod. iii. 6.
‖ 1 Cor. xii. 13. § Gal. iii. 27. ¶ 1 Cor. x. 17.
** 1 Cor. xi. 16.

ments, are expressive of certain acts of the mind. They are expressive of faith, by which Christ is received, and which we have seen is the bond, on the part of the believer, by which he is united to him. The symbols of the incarnate suffering Redeemer are incorporated with our bodies by the process of digestion; and although this is not an exact representation of the union, in which it has been shown there is no confusion or commixture of the parties, yet it is undoubtedly intended to remind us of the closeness of the connexion, by which those who were originally separate are brought together, and conjoined in the most intimate bonds. To the eye of a careless spectator, the sacraments of the church may appear mere ceremonies, which are of little use, and have little meaning. But they are emblematic of one of the most important facts in the Christian religion. They are visible signs of an invisible relation, upon which the enjoyment of all spiritual privileges and blessings depends. They attest that, although Jesus Christ is in heaven, and his followers are upon earth, yet distance of place does not divide them; for that he is present with them as he is not present with the world; that he is as near to them as are the elements which are applied or received into their bodies, and that he works as efficaciously in their souls as these do in their bodies.

Among the consequences or effects of this union, we may mention, in the first place, that all who belong to Christ are possessed of spiritual life. He said to his disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also,"* and he fulfils his word by the inhabitation of the Holy Ghost. By nature they "are dead in sin;" but they are "quickened together with him,"† that is, in connexion with him, and after the example of his resurrection. As in the natural body the head is the seat of sensation, and feeling and motion are communicated to all the members by means of the nerves, which have their origin in the brain; so from him flow those influences, by which believers are endowed with moral sensibility, and perform the various functions of the Christian life. "I live," says Paul, "and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."‡ Observe how careful he is, when he represents himself as living, to put us on our guard against supposing that this state was owing to himself, and to refer his spiritual power and activity to the Saviour, who dwelt in him, and from whom he derived constant assistance by the exercise of faith. Grace in the most eminent state, if it were left alone, would fail, like the water of a stream which is supplied only by occasional showers; but connected as it is with Christ as its source, it is like a stream from a perennial spring which always flows, although it may sometimes swell, and at other times sink. "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life."‖

The second effect of their union to Christ, is their communion with him in all the benefits which he purchased. "Ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power."§ Being united in him, they enjoy an interest in his righteousness, by which he fulfilled the law in their room, and are thus entitled to the blessings of justification. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."¶ Hence Paul "counted all things but dung that he might win Christ, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith."** They are adopted into the family of heaven, and made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with his Son Jesus Christ. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name."* They are sanctified in soul, body, and spirit, being enabled by his grace to die more and more unto sin, and to live unto righteousness. "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."† The outlines of the divine image, which were drawn upon their hearts in regeneration, are gradually filled up, or, in the language of an apostle, "they are changed into it from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."‡ Lastly, they are glorified together with him, in whom, as their head, they now sit in heavenly places. Of God he is made to them redemption, which imports deliverance from every evil, and introduction into a state of perfect and eternal felicity.

The last effect of their union to Christ which I shall mention, is their union to one another. They are one body, because they are partakers of that one Spirit. They compose a society closer and more compact than can be formed by civil institutions, or a community of interests, or the endearments of friendship. They were born in different countries, they speak different languages, they are engaged in different temporal pursuits, and are distinguished from each other by natural temper, education, condition, and other particulars; but they are like the parts of a complicated machine, which are not only externally joined together, but are acted upon by one mainspring, and perform one harmonious movement. They are united in their views of divine truth. They all believe the depravity of human nature, the divine character and atonement of the Saviour, the necessity of supernatural grace to renew and sanctify the soul. Their modes of expression on certain points may be different, but their faith is substantially the same. If there are some particulars in which they do not agree, they are inferior matters, (although unenlightened zeal may magnify their importance,) of which a man may be ignorant, and not only be safe, but enjoy uninterrupted communion with God. As they have one baptism, so they have also one faith. They are united in love. We sometimes see, it must be acknowledged, persons of whom we entertain a favourable opinion, keeping at a distance from, and even opposing one another. In certain cases there may be good reasons for this conduct, because one of the parties is not walking according to the gospel; but it does not always admit of this apology. Being imperfect, even saints sometimes fall out by the way without any sufficient cause, and sometimes their disputes originate in mistake. They do not know one another; they contend in the dark; they suppose the friends to be the enemies of truth. But one saint never hates another knowing him to be a saint. He loves the image of Christ wherever he perceives it, and loves every man in whom it appears. So far as the disciples of Christ do know one another, they dwell together as brethren in unity, overlooking minor differences for the sake of great points on which they are agreed, and their common relation to the Saviour. In a word, they are united in design. Animated by one Spirit, they have the same end in view, the glory of their Saviour, who died that they should not live to themselves, but to him. Hence we see their zeal awakened, and their powers called into action, by any object which will conduce to accomplish this design. If a spark be struck out, it increases into a flame, which spreads with rapidity from breast to breast, and from country to country, till the whole Christian world is illuminated and warmed by it. We have an example in the schemes which are at present carried on for the circulation of the Scriptures, and the propagation of the gospel; and in which Christians of all denominations, laying aside party feelings, most cordially combine their

* John xiv. 19. † Eph. ii. 5. ‡ Gal. ii. 20. ‖ John iv. 14.
§ Col. ii. 10. ¶ Rom. viii. 1. ** Phil. iii. 8, 9.

* John i. 12. † 1 Cor. vi. 11. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

counsels and their efforts. Thus, the prayer of Christ is answered, that his disciples may be one; and we look forward to the time when the union will be more complete, and more widely extended; when "there shall be one Lord, and his name shall be one," and when this prophecy shall be fulfilled, "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."*

The honour to which believers have been admitted by their union to Christ should excite their gratitude and their admiration of his condescension and grace. "What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?"† "Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth?"‡ They should firmly and constantly adhere to him by faith, for he is their life and strength; and their peace, comfort, and progressive sanctification depend upon the continuance of their relation, and the assiduity of this fellowship with him. "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."‖ In a word, they should walk worthily of their high privilege, and guard against every thing which has a tendency to separate them from him, and to impede their intercourse with him. Sin is infinitely offensive to him, and is contrary to the design with which he has united them to himself. As he who hath called them is holy, so they should be holy in all manner of conversation. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own: For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."§

LECTURE LXVIII.

ON FAITH.

Faith the Bond of Union to Christ—Different kinds of Faith—Saving Faith; its nature and qualities—Justifying Faith defined and explained—Is Assurance of the Essence of Faith?

In illustrating union to Christ, I have shown that the bond on our part, by which we are connected with him, is faith. It is a fruit of the spirit of regeneration; and although the soul which he has quickened begins immediately to exert itself in all the acts of spiritual life, yet faith is eminently entitled to attention, because it receives Christ, and has a direct and powerful influence upon our peace, and comfort, and sanctification. Much as it is undervalued by many, it is of indispensable necessity in religion; and while the question has been foolishly proposed, whether faith or morality is preferable, the truth is, that the idea of separating them should not be admitted for a moment; and that, as faith without morality is a mere pretence, so morality without faith is worth nothing.

Different kinds of faith are enumerated by theological writers, and are mentioned in Scripture. The first is called historical faith, which is a simple assent to the truths of revelation, and may be found in unregenerated men, who are sometimes said to believe. It receives this denomination, not because its object is limited to the histories of Scripture, for it comprehends also the doctrines, but because it is an assent of the same kind which we give to any credible history, and is a simple act of the understanding. This is the only faith which is produced by a rational demonstration of the truth of revelation: and hence we may observe by the way, that those ministers who dwell much upon the evidences of religion, are chargeable with misspending their time; because, in the first place, those whom they usually labour to convince, entertain no doubt of Christianity; and, in the second place, although they should succeed in establishing conviction in the minds of their sceptical hearers, they would make them only such believers as were Simon Magus and many others, who perished in their sins. The second, which is called temporary faith, consists in such a persuasion of the truths of religion as is accompanied with some impression upon the conscience and affections. Of this kind is the faith of those whom our Lord compares to the seed which fell upon stony ground, and hastily sprang up, but soon withered away. It has no root; it does not proceed from a mind enlightened, and a heart renewed by the spirit; and hence, when it is exposed to a severe trial, it fails. "When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the truth, by and by they are offended."* On this account it is called temporary faith, although in some instances it may last long, and, like the hope of the hypocrite, perish only at death, because, during the course of life, no cause occurred of sufficient force to extinguish it. The third kind of faith is called the faith of miracles; by which is meant, a persuasion supernaturally wrought in the mind of the person, that God would perform some miracle by him, or for him. Of the former persuasion our Lord speaks, when he says to his disciples, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."† To the latter persuasion he refers, when he said to two blind men, who besought him to have mercy on them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?"‡ and it was found in the cripple at Lystra, of whom it is related, that Paul "perceived that he had faith to be healed."‖ It is evident that this kind of faith was confined to particular persons, and a particular period of the church, and consequently is not a subject of general interest. The last kind of faith is called saving faith, because by it the salvation offered in the Gospel is received and enjoyed. It is the design of this lecture to explain it,—first, in general, as it respects the whole of divine revelation; and, secondly, in particular, as it respects the offer of pardon and eternal life through the Saviour. In this view, it is commonly called justifying faith.

In speaking of faith in general, I shall direct your attention to the definition of it, which is given by Paul in the first verse of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith, whether human or divine, is the belief of a testimony. The faith which we are now considering, is the belief of the testimony of God. How it operates in reference to the subjects of this testimony, whether they be considered simply as invisible, or as both invisible and future, the apostle explains in the words which we have quoted. Of things hoped for, or future good, it is the substance. Concerning the import of the original term—ὑπόστασις—translated *substance*, there has been a good deal of discussion, and it has been understood to signify confidence or subsistence. Faith is the confidence of things hoped for; because it assures us not only that there are such things, but that, through the power and faithfulness of God, we shall enjoy them. It is the substance of things hoped for; because it gives them, although future, a present subsistence in the minds of believers, so that they are influenced by them as if they were actually present. Thus the word was understood by some of the Greek commentators, who were the most competent judges of its meaning. "Since things which we hope for," says Chrysostom, "seem not to subsist, faith gives them subsistence, or rather it does not give it, but is itself their substance. Thus, the resurrec-

* Is. lii. 8. † Ps. viii. 4. ‡ 2 Chron. vi. 18.
‖ 2 Tim. ii. 1. § 1 Pet. i. 15. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

* Matt. xiii. 21. † Ib. xvii. 20.
‡ Ib. ix. 28. ‖ Acts. xiv. 9.

tion of the dead is not past, nor does it subsist, but faith gives it subsistence in our souls." "Faith," says another, "gives subsistence to the resurrection of the dead, and places it before our eyes." In human hopes there is a mixture of uncertainty; and reason itself will, in many cases, justify anxiety; but the foundation of Christian hope being the word and promise of God, the doubts which may arise in our minds are the consequences of the weakness of our faith; for, if our faith corresponded with the nature of the testimony, we should be as fully assured of what is future, as we are of what is present or past.

The objects of faith are not only future good, but invisible things, both good and evil, which are made known by divine revelation; and of these it is the evidence, ἔλεγχος, the *demonstration* or *conviction*. By our senses we become acquainted with the material world; by consciousness we are assured of the existence of our souls and their various faculties; and by reasoning we deduce one truth from another. But, besides these sources of information, a great part of our knowledge is derived from testimony. Thus, we know that there are cities and countries which we never saw; that events have happened at which we were not present; that certain persons lived in former ages, and performed certain actions; and that there are persons now alive who have not come within the sphere of our observation. Although there is a difference between the evidence of demonstration and the evidence of testimony, yet, in particular circumstances, there is no difference in the conviction produced; for no person in his senses entertains any more doubt that there is such a country as Greece or Italy, although he has not travelled from home, than he does of a proposition in mathematics which he fully comprehends. We depend upon testimony in matters of commerce and science, in all our ordinary transactions, and even in the important concerns of life and death. "If then we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater."* In the latter case, there is no possibility of mistake or deception. Besides, his testimony relates to many things of the utmost importance, with respect to which man could give us no information,—things which eye had not seen, ear had not heard, and it had not entered into the heart of man to conceive. Of these, faith is the evidence or demonstration. Being past, and future, and invisible on account of their distance from us, or the spirituality of their nature, they cannot be discovered by our senses; but the conviction of their reality is as strong in the mind of a believer, as if they were placed before his eyes.

This is a general account of faith, according to the definition of Paul; but, with a view to illustrate its nature more fully and distinctly, I request your attention to the following observations.

First, The objects of religion are invisible and future, and hence arises the indispensable necessity of faith. The objects with which worldly men are conversant, are present, or are considered not very distant; they are, or are expected soon to come, under the cognizance of their senses. Nothing seems to them to be important, which may not be seen, and felt, and enjoyed, in this sublunary state. If there be any thing which does not fall under this description, any thing which cannot be made subservient to the purposes of the present life, they regard it as a nonentity, or as a matter with which they have nothing to do. Christians are deemed enthusiasts or fools, who neglect the substance, and grasp at a shadow, dreaming of another world, which no man ever saw, instead of labouring to make themselves comfortable in this. In a certain sense, indeed, the things of this world are the objects of religion, because it regulates our conduct and affections in reference to them; but the motives by which it influences our minds, are derived from the invisible state, and the reward, to which it teaches us to aspire, lies beyond the narrow boundary of time and sense. A Christian is a citizen of the Jerusalem above; his conversation is in heaven; he looks at the things which are not seen, and eternal; he declares plainly, that he is seeking a country, even a heavenly one; he obeys the exhortation, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."*

In the second place, Of those objects with which religion is conversant, we can have no knowledge but by Divine revelation. It is on this account that they are objects of faith. We believe that they exist, upon the testimony of God. It may be supposed that this statement of the source of religious knowledge is not strictly true, for that some parts of it, at least, are discoverable by reason. By reason, we demonstrate the existence of God and infer a future state, in which men will be rewarded according to their works; but, without inquiring how far unassisted reason would advance in its researches, it is certain that, with respect even to these fundamental truths, it is to revelation alone that we are indebted for those views of them, which are the proper objects of religion. It is from revelation that we have derived the knowledge of that character of God, with which we, as sinners, are concerned. It is revelation which informs us that he is love; that he is merciful, and ready to forgive; that he has given his only-begotten Son for the salvation of the world; and that whosoever believes in him, shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. On these important subjects nature is silent; reason says nothing, because it is profoundly ignorant: they were so far from being suggested by meditations of the human mind, or according with its natural conceptions, that when they were first proposed, they were derided as folly. With respect to a future state, although the heathens entertained some obscure notions of it, for which, however, it is probable they were indebted more to tradition than to reasoning, it does not admit of a doubt that, without revelation, we should not have had the faintest idea of the heaven of Christianity, and should have known nothing concerning the means by which admission into it is obtained. It is the unrivalled glory of Jesus Christ, that "he hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."† Our religion is a free gift of God to our sinful race. It originated in the purpose which he purposed in himself before the beginning of time, and into which no man or angel could have pried; it is delivered to us in the Scriptures, which were not written by the will of man, but at the suggestion, and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit; and like some other gifts of God, it has not yet been imparted to all men, but, in the exercise of his sovereignty, has been granted to one nation, and withheld from another.

In the third place, Faith is an assent to the revelation which God has made of the truths of religion. We assent to a testimony, when we are persuaded of the veracity of the testifier, into which our faith is resolved. But, while this is a general definition of faith, it varies its aspect, if I may speak so, according to the subject of the testimony. When the testimony relates to a matter of indifference, a fact in which we take no interest, the assent is very slight, and may be called simple belief. But if the subject come home to our business and bosoms, a stronger impression is made. When a person, for example, is in distress or danger, and the testimony informs him of some generous friend, who is both able and willing to deliver him, and is exerting his power for his relief, the act of the mind

* 1 John v. 9.

* Col. iii. 2, 3. † 2 Tim. i. 10.

rises higher than simple belief, and is properly denominated trust or confidence. If we are looking forward with desire to an object, the possession of which will make us happy, and the testimony assures us that we shall obtain it, expectation is added to desire, and both united constitute hope. When we attend to the nature of the Christian religion, and consider that the subjects of which it treats are of infinite importance, that it exhibits the character of God in its grandest and most interesting features, displays all the miracles and blessings of redemption, and directs our views to the realities of eternity, we perceive that the faith which it demands must be very different from a cold naked assent. It being admitted, that a faith corresponding to the nature of the things revealed, implies the concurrence of the heart, as well as the conviction of the understanding, it will be easily conceded that its existence is rare. There are many who profess to believe the Gospel, and who do believe it in this sense, that they entertain a vague and confused notion of its truth; but their faith is merely a careless passive assent. They have been told that it is true, and perhaps have given attention to the evidences by which its truth is established, and they feel no disposition to call it in question. There is no particular reason why they should controvert the evidence, because they regarded the subject as a mere speculation, which they are under no necessity of reducing to practice; there are several reasons which incline them to yield to it, as the prejudices of education, the wishes of their friends, a regard to character and to their worldly interests. They do not enter into a close examination of the subject, nor institute an inquiry whether their assent be sincere and cordial. They are not infidels in the common acceptation of the word, and therefore they are believers. But their faith is totally different from a practical conviction. It has no influence upon their hearts; and were they tried by the standard of Scripture, or even by the laws of reason and common sense, it would be found that they do not really believe those truths, of which they probably think that they never entertained a doubt.

In the fourth place, Faith conveys to the mind a full conviction of the truths of religion. It is the substance, or confident expectation of things hoped for, the evidence or demonstration of things not seen. The ground of this conviction of the existence, and nature, and importance of its objects, is the infallible testimony on which it depends. What God has attested must be true, because, being omniscient, he cannot be mistaken, and being holy, he will not deceive. It may be objected, that this assurance, which is said to belong to faith, is not always found in believers, and that they are sometimes disturbed with doubts. The fact cannot be denied; but it is not at variance with the definition formerly given, which merely describes what faith is in itself, and what it ought to be in our experience. We should reflect that, like other graces, it subsists in imperfect beings, and has to contend with difficulties, by which its full exercise is impeded. Consciousness of personal demerit, and of the remains of sin in the heart, the appearances of Providence which seem to be opposed to the declarations and promises of Scripture, the temptations of Satan, and the suspension of Divine influences for the sins into which they have fallen, may involve Christians in mental distress, and lead them to call in question truths to which, in their happier hours, they yielded an unwavering assent. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"* When these obstacles are removed, and the believer fixes his undivided attention upon the faithfulness of God, he feels the same assurance of the truths of religion, however mysterious, and however contrary to the natural suggestions of the mind, which he does of his own existence, or of that of the material world. No conviction could be stronger than that of Abraham, when, without hesitation, he offered up Isaac, upon whose life the promises depended, and yet continued to hope for the blessings exhibited in them; and when he confidently expected a son, although he himself was old, and his wife was barren, and the time of child-bearing was past. This was faith in its highest state. It is proposed for our imitation; and as it is implied, that the same trust in God is attainable by others, so there is no reason to doubt that many have trodden, and are still treading in the steps of that illustrious man, and are glorifying God by an unqualified dependence on his word.

Lastly, through faith, the truths of religion exert influence upon the mind, as if they were perceived by the senses. It considers them as realities, and is suitably affected by them. It has been said that, if the solemn and awful scenes which revelation describes were actually disclosed to view, the sight would overwhelm us; and all worldly affairs would be suspended as too insignificant to engage our attention. This may be true; and it may have been for this reason the will of God, that, in this sublunary state, we should walk by faith and not by sight. Yet such is the assurance of the existence and magnitude of invisible things which faith produces, that they not only excite powerful emotions in the hearts of believers, and give a new direction to their conduct, but they often make a stronger impression upon them than is made by the things which are visible and present. Hence, they renounce the pleasures of sin for the happiness promised by religion; and abandon the world as their portion, in the expectation of the heavenly inheritance. The sacrifices which a Christian has often made, of his will, his ease, his honour, his wealth, his friends, and even of his life, are proofs of the mighty power of faith. These are the trophies which adorn its triumphs. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."*

Thus far I have given you an account of faith in general, as it respects the whole revelation contained in the Scriptures, and makes all the doctrines and facts recorded in them bear upon the mind, so as to promote our conformity to the will of God, and our final salvation. Being founded upon his testimony, it respects every thing which he has attested, and improves it for the purpose which it was intended to serve. It is conversant with things past as well as with things to come, with things awful and alarming, as well as with those which are calculated to impart peace and consolation to the soul. By faith, we are assured of the threatenings of the law, as well as of the promises of the Gospel; we are moved with fear, as well as animated with hope. It is of great utility and indispensable necessity to the Christian, in the present life; it excites him to the performance of his duty, and supports him in adversity, and fortifies his mind against temptation. "The people that know their God, are strong, and do exploits."† They resist the assaults of Satan whether violent or insidious, overcome the allurements and terrors of the world, and persevere to the end in a course of holy obedience.

I now proceed to speak of justifying faith, or the faith by which a sinner obtains an interest in Jesus Christ, and the blessings of salvation. Let it be observed, that it is not different in its nature from the faith already described, for it is the same grace which operates in the believer, whatever is the object upon which it is fixed. It is called justifying faith, on account of the design to which it is subservient; and, in this view, its exclusive object is that part of revela-

* Matt. xvi. 31.

* 1 John v. 4. † Dan. xi. 32.

tion which relates to the Saviour, or the Gospel, strictly so called.

The first remark which I make is, that the object of justifying faith is Jesus Christ, and redemption through his blood. Paul said to the jailor of Philippi, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* The person addressed was a sinner, convinced and alarmed, dreading the vengeance of his Maker, and anxiously inquiring how he might be delivered from it. The words are an answer to his question, and must, therefore, point out the object which alone could dispel his fears, and inspire him with hope. This design can be accomplished only by the revelation of a Saviour, or by the Gospel as distinguished from the Law. The faith of the law an awakened sinner already possesses, for his fears proceed from his belief that it is holy and just, and that its threatenings will be executed upon those who have transgressed it, unless they find out some method of escaping its penalty. Nothing will relieve the mind of a criminal condemned to die, but authentic information that his sovereign is willing to pardon him; and nothing will set free the convinced sinner from the terror which he feels, but the knowledge of the mercy of God, through the mediation of his Son. The object, then, of justifying faith is Christ crucified,—Christ lifted up on the cross, like the brazen serpent in the wilderness,—Christ as having borne our sins in his own body on the tree, his blood shed as a propitiation for sin, and the everlasting righteousness which he brought in as the foundation of hope to those who had no hope in themselves. It is false and foolish to suppose, that men may be saved by faith in God as their Creator, and Preserver, and Lawgiver. If they considered him in no other light, and understood the full import of these characters, they would perceive that he is inaccessible to the guilty, a consuming fire, the avenger of such as do evil. It is in the Gospel only, that a sinner will find those views of his character which will quiet the agitation of his mind, and hold out encouragement to return to him. He will never look to his Maker with comfort and hope, till he behold him in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to men. There is no other refuge from his wrath but the atonement.

Secondly, To the revelation of the Saviour in the Gospel, the awakened sinner, under the influence of the Spirit, yields a cordial assent; and this act of his mind is therefore denominated faith. Faith is the belief of a testimony; and is called human faith, when its object is the testimony of man: divine faith, when its object is the testimony of God. The cold and listless assent which is every day given to the Gospel, by thousands who take no interest in it, and are in no degree influenced by it in their practice, if it be called faith at all, is evidently inferior to the faith of devils, who "believe and tremble," while those persons believe and disregard. The awakened sinner is under the conduct of the Spirit, who presents the Gospel to his mind with an evidence which has all the force of demonstration. To this internal revelation, this illumination of the mind by supernatural grace, the Scriptures refer, when they speak of "the opening of the blind eyes," and of the coming of the Gospel "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."† It is impossible to describe the operations of the mind, so as to render them intelligible to those by whom they have not been experienced; but we can all conceive the difference between the assent that we give to a truth, which we have not properly considered and about which we feel no concern, and our assent to a truth which we understand, and know to be intimately connected with our interests. Such is the difference between the faith of nominal Christians, and the faith by which we are saved. The latter is founded on clear perceptions of the truth, and excellence and infinite importance of the Gospel. An evidence accompanies it, which dispels all doubts, removes all objections, and creates the highest assurance; Christ crucified is seen to be the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. The Gospel appears to be worthy of all acceptation, because it is so admirably adapted to the circumstances of men, and redounds so much to the glory of God. It bears upon it the signature of Heaven. It is the truth, and in the judgment of the enlightened sinner, the only truth which deserves his attention. This is the "excellent knowledge of Christ," for which he is willing to count all things loss.*

Thirdly, Faith implies the reliance or dependence of the soul upon Jesus Christ for salvation. The sinner not only assents to the testimony of God concerning his Son as true, but regards it as worthy of all acceptation. Some indeed, as I remarked in a former lecture, make faith consist in simple assent, because this is the strict and logical definition of the term, and consequently consider it as an act of the understanding alone. But as the Scriptures make use of new words and phrases to express new ideas, so they employ some old words in a sense peculiar to themselves; and we should proceed with them as we do with any other book, when we endeavour, by comparing one passage with another, to ascertain the meaning of a particular term which occurs in it. That, in the phraseology of Scripture, faith is not simply an assent of the understanding, but implies an act of volition accepting the Saviour and confiding in him, is evident from the metaphorical terms by which it is described. It is called a receiving of Christ, a coming to him, a fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, an eating of his flesh, and a drinking of his blood. These terms import such motion or activity as the soul exerts, when it not only contemplates, but desires and embraces the good which is presented to it. In the Old Testament, faith is called trusting in the Lord. Now we know that to trust in a person, is not merely to believe that he is able and willing to deliver us from danger and distress, and to bestow favours upon us, but to accept his proffered assistance, and to commit our interest to his care and disposal. If we reflect upon the situation of a sinner when he believes, we shall more distinctly perceive what is, and naturally must be, the exercise of his mind. Finding himself condemned by the law of God and his own conscience, and disappointed in his endeavours to relieve himself, by his prayers, and tears, and fasts, and good works, how is he affected when Jesus Christ is revealed as the only Saviour from sin? Is he not like the drowning man, who eagerly grasps the plank thrown out to support him; or like the manslayer, who, seeing the avenger of blood close at his heels, ran for safety into the city of refuge? He does not content himself with saying, 'the blood of Christ is infinitely meritorious, and happy should I be, if I could share in the blessings procured by it.' This, we need not doubt, devils could say; for they are aware of the efficacy of his sacrifice, and would rejoice if it were possible to be delivered by it from torment. He farther says, 'I desire to be sprinkled with his blood, that, like the Israelites in Egypt, I may escape, when the wrath of God shall go forth against his enemies. I place my hope upon the great Atonement, by which the justice of heaven has been appeased; I will draw near to God, pleading the merit of his Son; I will present to him his all-perfect righteousness, of which he has testified his high approbation.' It remains, that faith is an acquiescence in the plan of re-

* Acts xvi. 31. † Ib. xxvi. 18. 1 Thess. i. 5.

* Phil. iii. 8.

demption through the mediation of Christ, a reliance upon him as our Saviour, and consequently, that, if there has not been a concurrence of mind and heart in receiving the testimony of the Gospel, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins.

Lastly, Faith implies the renunciation of our own righteousness as the foundation of our hope. This is an obvious inference from the preceding remarks, without attention to which the nature of faith will not be understood. It is not a partial, but an unreserved reliance upon Christ for salvation. To believe, is not to call upon him to assist us in what we have commenced and carried on to a certain extent, but from a consciousness of our utter inability even to begin, to commit the work of our salvation wholly to him. This is the test of genuine faith. This is the faith of God's elect, which leads away the sinner from himself to the Saviour, fixes his undivided attention upon the cross, and derives his peace and hope solely from the sacrifice which was offered upon it. It is a spurious faith, which, forming a treacherous alliance with good works, attempts to introduce them as a partial cause of our acceptance with God. "To him that worketh," says Paul, "the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."* These words are worthy of attention. To work and to believe are opposed to each other. He who believes, does not work, that is, he does not work that he may live, perform duties with a view to obtain the divine favour, associate his own obedience with that of our Redeemer as the ground of his justification. He simply believes; that is, he receives the testimony of God concerning his Son, and expects salvation through him alone. It is on this account that true faith is so rare. Men would not object to the aid of Jesus Christ, so far as their own power is insufficient to save them: but to depend upon him to the exclusion of all their own qualifications and good deeds, to owe every thing to him, and to have nothing left of which they may boast as their own,—all this is so contrary to the natural bias of the heart, so mortifying to pride, so destructive of our schemes for appearing respectable in our own eyes, and maintaining what we falsely call the dignity of human nature, that at first we all revolt from it with secret indignation, and will not submit to the humiliating plan, till we have been prepared by the discipline of the law, and the grace of the Gospel. It is the office of faith to receive Christ, as he is revealed in the Scriptures. He is offered freely, and we must receive him without presenting any price in exchange. He is exhibited as the only Saviour; and to receive him as such, is to trust, neither in the merits of any saint, nor in the intercession of any angel, nor in our own repentance and obedience, but in him whose arm brought us salvation, and who claims the undivided glory of a work, which he accomplished without an associate. To believe, is to submit to the righteousness of God; it is to desist from our vain attempts to establish our own righteousness, and to say, "In the Lord have we righteousness and strength."†

What has been said concerning faith in general, and justifying faith in particular, is conformable to the doctrine of our church. "By this faith," says our Confession, "a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace."*

When the question is proposed, whether assurance is of the essence of faith, it is necessary, before we return an answer, to know what is meant by assurance. If it mean a full persuasion of the truth of the divine testimony, to whatever subject it relates, we answer, that it is essential to faith. Faith is not a doubting, hesitating assent, but "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The Christian is firmly persuaded of every doctrine and fact which God has attested, and of every promise which he has made. He believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners; that his death was an atonement for guilt; that there is redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; that he is freely offered to him and others in the Gospel, and that every man who trusts in him shall be saved. But if assurance mean an explicit assurance of our own salvation, we deny that it is of the essence of faith.

In opposition to Papists, who made faith consist in an assent to the truth of the Scriptures in general, and denied that any man could be certain of his final salvation, the Reformers represented it as a firm persuasion, that Christ died for us in particular, and that our sins are forgiven. The founders of our religious society adopted this notion, and in one of their public deeds,† have defined faith to be a persuasion on the part of the sinner, that Christ is his; that what he did and suffered he did and suffered for him, and that he shall have life and salvation by him. It may be questioned whether in avoiding one extreme, they have not run into another; or, at least, have not employed language, which must be explained and qualified, in order to make it accord with the truth. A sinner cannot say, in the first instance, Christ is mine in possession; because this becomes true, only when he has believed, and cannot belong to the nature of faith, as it is a consequence of it. If the words mean only, that Christ is his in the offer of the Gospel, or is offered to him in particular, we allow it, but have a right to complain, that a fact about which there is no dispute, should be expressed in terms which are apt to suggest a quite different sense. The sinner cannot say, till he have believed, that Christ died for him, unless he died for all men without exception; but, consistently with the doctrine of particular redemption, no man can be assured that he was one of the objects of the sacrifice of the cross, unless he have first obtained an interest in it by faith. Neither can every sinner say, in the first moment of faith, that he shall certainly have eternal salvation. He desires salvation no doubt, and his faith implies an expectation of it; but how many believers have been harassed with doubts at first, and during the whole course of their lives have rarely been able to use the language of confidence! This the advocates of this definition are compelled to admit; and it is curious to observe how, in attempting to reconcile it with their system, they shift and shuffle, and almost retract, and involve themselves in perplexity and contradiction, as those must do who are labouring to prove that, although it is a fact that many believers are not assured of their salvation, yet assurance is of the essence of faith. It is manifest that, if assurance is of the essence of faith, it can never be separated from it.—The exercise of faith is regulated by the word of God, and its object is there defined. But it is nowhere revealed in the Scriptures, that Christ died for any particular person, and that his sins are forgiven. How, then, can an assurance of these things belong to the nature of faith? How can it be our duty to believe what is not in the testimony? It is an objection against this definition, that it makes faith consist rather in the belief

* Rom. iv. 4, 5. † Is. xlv. 24.

* Confes. ch. xiv. § 2. † Act of Assoc. Pres. 21st Oct. 1742.

of something regarding ourselves, than in the belief of the testimony of God; in the belief of the goodness of our state, rather than of the all-sufficiency and willingness of Christ. It may be farther objected, that it confounds the inferences from faith with faith itself; nothing being plainer than that these propositions, 'Christ died for me,' 'my sins are forgiven,' are conclusions to which the mind comes, from the previous belief of the doctrines and promises of the Gospel. Farther, it is chargeable with this error, that it defines faith in its highest and most perfect state, and excludes the lower degrees of it, and thus lays a stumbling-block before thousands of the people of God, who, not finding in themselves this assurance, are distressed with the melancholy thought that they are unbelievers. Although adopted by our fathers, it is contrary to the doctrine of our standards, to which only we are bound to conform, and in which it is expressly said, "This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be a partaker of it."* In a word, this definition of faith has been rejected by many of the greatest divines. I shall mention only one, the learned and pious Bishop Davenant, who observes, in his work entitled *Determinationes Quæstionum quarundam Theologicarum*,† that the word confidence or assurance has two meanings. It signifies the act of resting upon, and adhering to Jesus Christ, by which we embrace him as with both our arms, and seek to obtain pardon, grace, and glory from the Father. Justification follows this act, whether the sinner be fully persuaded of the remission of his sins or not. But sometimes it denotes an effect consequent to justification, namely, the full persuasion and lively sense of pardon, and the favour of God. We confess, he says, that this confidence or assurance is not justifying faith, but its daughter, and that the justified soul is not wont to obtain it, but after many exercises of faith and holiness.

It is admitted, that an assurance of salvation is attainable in the present life. An apostle exhorts Christians "to make their calling and election sure."‡ The exhortation implies that they may not be assured of the goodness of their state, for no man would be exhorted to seek what he already possesses, and, consequently, that this persuasion is not found in every believer, as it would be if it belonged to the nature of faith. They are called upon to examine themselves, whether they be in the faith; but this would be unnecessary, if there were an evidence in faith itself which satisfied the mind. The assurance of which we speak, is not obtained by the direct act of faith, but by reflection. It is the result of evidence, collected by observation and inquiry, that the person is possessed of the faith to which salvation is promised. It is "founded," our Church says, "upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God; which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption."‖ By many theological writers this assurance has been called the reflex act of faith, but with manifest impropriety. It is not an act of faith, but a process of reasoning founded upon faith, and may be reduced to a regular syllogism: Every man who believes in Jesus Christ shall be saved; but I have believed in Christ, as is proved by the operations of divine grace in my heart; therefore I shall be saved. The major of this proposition is a matter of faith, because it is a revealed truth; the minor is a matter of experience; and the conclusion is of a mixed nature, partaking of the character of both. It is more accurate to call it the assurance of sense, because it is founded on our feelings and dispositions. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater that our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."*

It is evident, from the preceding account, that "faith is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God."† Without particular assistance, we may assent to the Gospel, upon perceiving the evidence of its truth; but, unless our minds be enlightened, and our hearts be renewed by almighty grace, we will not cordially embrace it, and comply with its design, by placing our whole dependance upon Christ and renouncing every other foundation of hope. Faith is an act, not of the carnal, but of the regenerated man. This important truth we should always bear in mind, that we may seek faith from Him who only can bestow it; and, if we have obtained it, may give all the praise and glory to God. It is explicitly laid down by our Lord in the following words: "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me,"‡

* Conf. ch. xviii. § 3.
† Determination of certain Theological Questions.
‡ 2 Pet. i. 10.
‖ Conf. chap. xviii. § 2.

LECTURE LXIX.

ON THE PRIVILEGES OF BELIEVERS:—JUSTIFICATION.

Importance of the Doctrine—Meaning of the term Justification—The Author and Subjects of Justification—Implies that a Sinner is pardoned, and accounted righteous—Ground of Justification, not the Works of the Law.

THE subject which we are now to consider is entitled to the most serious attention, on account of the important place which it holds in the system of religion. To a man who acknowledges himself to be a sinner, no inquiry is so interesting as that which relates to the means of his restoration to the favour of God; and, if he is thoroughly convinced of his guilt and danger, he will find no rest till he has obtained a satisfactory answer to it. Till this point is decided, all other information respecting religion will be unavailing. Demonstrations of the existence of God will only serve to confirm, and more deeply impress upon his mind, the awful truth which he already believes, that there is a righteous Judge, before whom he must appear, and by whose sentence his final doom will be fixed. To explain the moral law to him, and inculcate the obligations to obey it, will be to act the part of a public accuser, when he quotes the statutes of the land in order to show that the charges which he has brought against the criminals at the bar are well founded, and, consequently, that he is worthy of punishment. The stronger the arguments are by which you evince the immortality of the soul, the more clearly do you prove that his punishment will not be temporary, and that there is another state of existence, in which he will be fully recompensed according to his desert. Hence you perceive how defective is not only natural religion, but that spurious Christianity, the publication of which Unitarians affirm to have been the sole design of the mission of our Saviour. There

* 1 John iii. 14, 19—21. † Eph. ii. 8. ‡ John vi. 44.

is nothing in a pure morality, and the doctrine of the resurrection and a future state, to relieve the mind of a sinner.

It is the glory of the gospel, that it reveals the method according to which a sinner may obtain peace with his Maker, and may rise to the possession of eternal life. It resolves the important question, how a man may be just with God. But although the information which he gives on this subject is sufficiently clear, it may be misapprehended, through carelessness and prejudice; and, accordingly, we find that there has been, and still is, a diversity of opinion among professed Christians with respect to the ground of acceptance. An error upon this point is fundamental; for, as there is only one way to heaven, if we miss it and take another, it is certain that we shall not arrive at that happy place. If we entertain right views of the doctrine of justification, we cannot go far wrong with respect to any other essential truth of Christianity; but a mistake here will affect the whole system, and give rise to false conceptions of the character of God, of the mediation of Christ, of the law, of the gospel, of grace, and of works. It was justly termed by Luther, *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*, "the article of a standing or falling church:" because, according to the views which are adopted in any church with respect to the means of regaining the favour of God, true piety or holiness will flourish or decline in it. I may add, that it was eminently through the preaching of the scriptural doctrine of justification, that the reformation from Popery was effected. The light of this truth discovered to men the abominations of Antichrist, and made them renounce the merit of good works, the efficacy of fasts, and pilgrimages, and penances, the intercession of saints and angels, the sacrifice of the mass, and all the other tenets by which the mediation of Christ had been virtually set aside, and sinners had been led to rest their hope upon a foundation of sand.

It is necessary, in the first place, to ascertain the meaning of the term justification. It is a Latin word, which, however, is not of classical authority, and is found, I believe, only in the works of ecclesiastical writers. If we explain it according to the laws of etymology, it will signify the making of a person just, as sanctification signifies the making of a person holy. Hence some of the ancients were misled with regard to the meaning of the term, and confounded justification with sanctification. The church of Rome has fallen into this same error. The justification of a sinner is declared by the council of Trent to be not only the remission of sin, but also sanctification and the renovation of the inward man, by which a person who was unjust is made just, and instead of an enemy becomes a friend, so that he is an heir according to the hope of eternal life.—"The formal cause of it is the righteousness of God, not that by which he is himself righteous, but that by which he makes us righteous; and by which, bestowed upon us as his gift, we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are not only accounted, but are truly called, and are righteous, receiving each of us righteousness in ourselves according to our measure, which the Spirit distributes to every man as he wills, and according to the peculiar disposition and co-operation of every man." The council then proceeds to enact the following decree:—"If any man shall say that men are justified solely by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, or solely by the remission of sins to the exclusion of grace and charity which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit, and is inherent in them, or even that the grace by which we are justified is only the favour of God, let him be accursed."* This is called the first justification, and it is said to be by faith, in a sense, however, which does not altogether exclude merit and predisposing qualifications. The second justification is said to be by works, performed by the aid of the grace which was infused in the first.

Justification is a forensic term, which denotes not a change of a person's dispositions, but a change of his state in relation to the law. It does not make him righteous by an infusion of holy habits, but pronounces him righteous on valid grounds. This appears from many passages to be the meaning of the Hebrew word צדק, and the Greek word *δικαιοω*. "If there be a controversy among men, and they come into judgment that the judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked."* To justify the righteous is not to make him, but to pronounce him, righteous upon proof of his innocence, and of the goodness of his cause. For this alone is the office of a judge. "To justify the wicked," signifies to pronounce him just, or to acquit him in judgment, and is declared to be an "abomination to the Lord,"† as it is to condemn the righteous, or pronounce him to be guilty. "He is near that justifieth me; and who is he that will contend with me?"‡ These are the words of our Saviour, and refer to the sentence of his Father, by which he was acquitted from every false charge brought against him by his enemies, as well as from the demands of law and justice which he had fully satisfied. The word is evidently used in the same sense when the Psalmist says, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."‖ He is speaking to God as his Judge, and he intreats him that he may not be brought to trial; because neither he nor any other person could expect a sentence in his favour.

In the New Testament, the word *δικαιων* always bears a forensic sense, or a sense closely connected with it, importing not to make, but to pronounce righteous. When wisdom is said to be "justified of her children,"§ the meaning is, that she is approved or vindicated by them, exhibited in her true character, and cleared from the aspersions of her enemies. The man who is desirous to justify himself, is a man who is eager to prove that there is no defect in his obedience. Of this description were the Pharisees, who maintained that men were accepted by God on the ground of their good works, and made a show of righteousness before the world. "Ye are they that justify yourselves before men."¶ The publican went down to his house "justified,"** that is, acquitted and pardoned by God, whose mercy he had humbly implored. "The doers of the law shall be justified,"†† that is, they, and they alone, shall be esteemed righteous by the law, or rather by the Lawgiver. The forensic sense of justification is manifest from its being opposed to condemnation. "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" "Judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification."‡‡ It is unnecessary to multiply proofs, as the matter is abundantly plain. Justification is a change, not of our nature, but of our state. Those who are justified are also regenerated; but the two privileges, although inseparable, are perfectly distinct.

The author of justification is God. "It is God that justifieth." The person to be justified is accountable to him as his Creator and Lawgiver, and by his sentence he must stand or fall. In this transaction he sustains the character of the guardian of the law, who will take care, if I may speak so, that its authority shall not be subverted, and its rights be violated by any sentence which he may pronounce in favour of its subjects;

* Concil. Trident. Sess. vi. Decret. et Canon, *de justificatione*.

* Deut. xxv.-1.
‖ Ps. cxliii. 2.
** Ib. xviii. 14.
‡ Prov. xvii. 15.
§ Matt. xi. 19.
†† Rom. ii. 13.
† Is. l. 8.
¶ Luke xvi. 15.
‡‡ Ib. viii. 33, 34, v. 16.

and of the God of grace, who receives into favour those whom he might have justly excluded from his presence. It is said, indeed, in the Book of Daniel, that "they who turn many to righteousness," or literally, who justify many, "shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."* But their justification of others is merely ministerial, and must be understood of their agency under God in bringing men to that faith through which they are justified. In the same way we must explain those words of Christ, which seem to put the power of eternal life and death into the hands of his apostles: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."† If there is no reference to the miraculous gift of discerning spirits, by which they could certainly judge of the state of individuals, and pronounce a sentence upon them which would be ratified in heaven, nothing further can be intended than that, as preachers of the word, they were authorised to declare the characters of those who should be justified, and of those who should be condemned, to assure believers of eternal life, and unbelievers of eternal death.

The person who is justified is a sinner. God "justifieth the ungodly."‡ He is considered as one who has violated the law, and the design of the sentence is to set him free from the consequences of transgression. If he were not a sinner, he would be under no necessity to make anxious inquiries respecting the means of restoration to the favour of the Lawgiver. He would be already justified, for God always beholds the righteous with a pleasant countenance.

"Those whom God effectually calleth," says our confession of Faith, "he also freely justifieth, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous."‖ Although justification is represented as a single act, and is commonly spoken of as a single blessing, yet it consists, according to this definition, of more parts than one, to which, when attempting to explain its nature, we must separately direct our attention. The person to be justified is a sinner; and justification is a sentence declaring him to be just in the eye of the law. Two things are necessarily involved in this sentence; first, that he is acquitted from every charge of transgression which is brought against him by the law; and secondly, that he is accounted to have fulfilled, or on some ground treated as if he had fulfilled, its demands.

Justification implies the acquittal of the justified person from the charges of the law. It may here be observed, that the person in whose favour a legal sentence is pronounced, may be viewed as innocent or guilty. If he is innocent, the law acquits him, by declaring the charge to be unfounded, or, in the language of Scripture, by "bringing forth his righteousness as the noonday." It is impossible that a trial on false grounds can take place at the tribunal of God; but cases of this kind frequently occur in human courts of justice. If he is guilty, as all those are who obtain the blessing of which we are speaking, the law grants him a pardon, or, to express myself more accurately, as pardon is not the act of the law, he is forgiven by the Lawgiver, or the person in whose hands the administration of justice and mercy is lodged.

The pardon of sin consists in the absolution of the sinner from the obligation to punishment under which he was lying. This is the nature of remission, whether it refer to crimes committed against the law of God, or to crimes committed against the laws of men. Obedience is not merely recommended to us in the way of counsel, which leaves a person to act as he may think proper, but is enjoined by authority, and enforced by the most solemn sanctions: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."* As soon, therefore, as a man transgresses the commandment, he becomes guilty; or, in other words, he is liable to the penalty, and bound to suffer it by the sentence of the Lawgiver. To pardon this man, is to declare, upon grounds which will be afterwards specified, that, although he has violated the law, it shall not have its course upon him; that he shall be exempted from the fatal effects of his transgressions, and be treated as if he were innocent. Remission places him in the same relation to the law as if he had not sinned. He is no more under a sentence of condemnation than Adam was before his fall. As one sin subjects the offender to the penalty, if God should enter into judgment with him, it would be impossible that he could escape, since his sins are numerous as the stars of heaven, or the sand upon the seashore. But God will not enter into judgment with him, nor listen to any of the charges which the law or his conscience may advance, because his justice has received full satisfaction for all his acts of disobedience. Hence the Scriptures employ a variety of metaphorical expressions to show that the guilt of pardoned sin is completely cancelled, and that those who are forgiven are secured against every penal evil. God is said to have "blotted out their sins;" "not to remember them:" to have "cast them behind his back;" to have "cast them into the depths of the sea;" "not to impute them;" and they are represented as so hidden, that when they are "sought for, they shall not be found."† It is evident that these things must be understood, not literally, but as alluding to the various ways in which an object may be concealed from the eyes of men, or banished from their minds. They intimate that, although the sins are ever present to the knowledge of God, who, being infinitely holy, must always view them with abhorrence, yet he will deal with believers in the same gracious manner as if he had forgotten their offences, and they were actually removed out of his sight. Hence, it has been said that God beholds no sin in believers. The proposition gave rise to controversy, and we cannot wonder that it did so, as it is expressed in a paradoxical form. If it mean that, literally, God sees no sin in them, it would be false, because he knows them to be chargeable with many transgressions; but nothing more is intended than that he sees in them no obligation to punishment, no ground on which he may proceed against them as a judge. This is a Scriptural truth; which ought to have been expressed in plain and simple terms; no good purpose could be gained by throwing it into a form calculated to surprise and perplex. We may say of this and some other paradoxes relative to the same subject, which caused much discussion more than a hundred years ago,—such as, that believers contract no new guilt by new crimes; that God is not offended by their sins; that confession, and repentance, and prayer, are not necessary to pardon; we may say of them that, if not altogether false, they are a pitiful play upon words; and that, while the sentiments which they were meant to convey, so far as agreeable to Scripture, might be defended, the language ought to have been universally condemned. It is a poor employment to turn the doctrines of religion into riddles.

Such, then, is the nature of remission. It delivers the guilty from the curse of the law; it places those who were devoted to destruction in a state of safety; it averts the judgments which were hanging over their heads, and threatened to overwhelm them for ever. They may confidently say, "O Lord, we will praise thee: though thou wast angry with us, yet thine anger

* Dan. xii. 3. † John xx. 23. ‡ Rom. iv. 5.
‖ Westm. Conf. ch. xi. § 1.

* Gal. iii. 10.
† Is. xliv. 22. xliii. 25. xxxviii. 17. Micah vii. 19. Ps. xxxii. 2. Jer. l. 20.

is turned away, and thou hast comforted us."* Sin, although a deadly poison, cannot now destroy them, because an effectual antidote has been administered. Its influence, indeed, is pernicious, and they should guard against it with the utmost circumspection, because it will pollute their souls, disturb their peace, and displease their heavenly Father; but, although it may subject them to chastisements, it will never expose them to his avenging wrath: "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."†

The pardon which is granted in justification is full, extending to all the transgressions of the guilty persons: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "By him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses."‡ That law appointed sacrifices for many offences, but there were some for which no atonement was provided. The sacrifice of Christ was an atonement for sins of every kind and degree. Hence, in the Gospel a promise of pardon is made to every man who believes, without any exception; and if there is no sin which shall not be forgiven, it is excepted, not because there was not sufficient virtue in the blood of Christ to expiate it, but because it consists in a deliberate and wilful rejection of his sacrifice; so that the unhappy man is in the same condition with the patient under a dangerous disease, who will not take the only medicine which could cure him, and is therefore abandoned by his physician. With respect to past and present sins, there is no doubt that they are immediately remitted, so that the only question relates to those of which the believer may be afterwards guilty. To some it has appeared improper to say, that they also are forgiven as soon as he believes; because there is an absurdity, they think, in supposing a debt to be cancelled before it is contracted. To this objection it may be replied, that there is no more ground for the charge of absurdity in this case than in that of our Saviour, to whom all the sins of his people, past, present, and to come, were at once imputed; for "the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all;"‖ and who consequently made satisfaction for millions of sins which had not yet been committed. There is no difficulty in the pardon, which does not occur in the expiation, of future sins. It should be considered that we are speaking of a Divine transaction; and that, to him whose prerogative it is to justify the ungodly, the future is as the past, as fully known, and equally the subject of his purposes and proceedings. When a sinner believes, he obtains an interest in the atonement which was made for all his sins. It is not conceivable, therefore, that only a part of his sins should be pardoned; the blood of Christ, which secures him against condemnation for those which are past and present, must secure him, at the same time, with respect to those which are future. This is all that is meant by the pardon of these sins. He is placed in such a situation, that they shall not be imputed to him. He is delivered from the curse, or the sentence pronounced upon the transgressors of the law; so that, although he may afterwards transgress, the sentence shall not pass upon him. He may daily offend, for there is no man that "liveth and sinneth not;" but whatever his own apprehensions may be, God is at peace with him: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness; their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."§

Hence it appears, that the pardon granted in justification is irrevocable. The man whom his sovereign has forgiven for one act of rebellion, may revolt from his allegiance a second time, and again fall under his displeasure. But "the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance." We must not imagine that, like an earthly prince, he frequently changes the objects of his love, and that those who are his favourites to-day, may incur his hatred to-morrow. A foundation is laid for the permanent exercise of his mercy and good-will towards believers, in the never-failing efficacy of the atonement of his Son. His blood answers every charge, covers every sin, enforces every plea, and itself pleads with irresistible eloquence in behalf of those for whom it was shed. The sins into which the believer may fall through the treachery of his heart and the influence of temptation, are not a reason why his pardon should be revoked. Conscious of demerit, he may dread the consequence, and be alarmed when he thinks of divine justice, which he has offended and cannot appease; but while repentance and humiliation are his duty, his fears of final condemnation are unfounded, because the sin which disquiets him was expiated on the cross, and the justice before which he trembles requires his absolution.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."* Man would have been blessed if he had never sinned, and, continuing to obey his Creator, had enjoyed the happiness which would have flowed from his favour. Since he has fallen, he can now only be blessed when the anger of God is averted from him, and he is treated as if he were innocent.

The forgiveness of sins is not the only blessing which is implied in justification. Although a criminal were fully pardoned, yet, if nothing more were done, he would have no title to the privileges and rewards which were promised to obedient subjects. It is necessary that the sinner should not only be delivered from guilt, but should also be accounted righteous, or treated, on some valid ground, as if he had fulfilled the demands of the law.

Some indeed maintain, that justification consists solely in the remission of sins; but it may be easily shown that this is a mistake. The Scripture describes this privilege as comprehending the imputation of righteousness to us, and as the constituting of us righteous before God, when it speaks of the "blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works."† "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."‡ The term, to justify, implies something more than the pardon of sin, for it signifies to pronounce a person to be just; and the criminal is not just in the eye of the law, merely because he is pardoned. There is, indeed, now no charge which can be alleged against him as the reason why he should be condemned and punished; but there is a great difference between simple innocence and righteousness. Righteousness supposes that the whole law has been fulfilled; innocence imports only that it has not been transgressed. I may remark by the way, that even innocence is not the effect of pardon, because pardon pre-supposes that the law has been violated; and the only effect of it in respect of a believer, is to place him in the same situation with an innocent person in so far that the penalty will not be executed any more upon the one than upon the other. No man can be pronounced just by him who judges according to truth, unless he be possessed of justice or righteousness. In the case of a sinner, therefore, the imputation of righteousness is pre-supposed as the ground of his justification, which, consequently, implies something more than simple remission. Besides, let it be considered that, although the remission of sins is a blessing of incalculable value, it does not fully answer the design of the substitution of Christ in our room, or

* Is. xii. 1. † Rom. viii. 1. ‡ Matt. xii. 31. Acts xiii. 39.
‖ Is. liii. 6. § Heb. viii. 12.

* Ps. xxxii. 1, 2. † Rom. iv. 6. ‡ Rom. v. 19.

the expectations and desires of the sinner. The object of his suretyship and sacrifice was, not only to reconcile us to God, but to restore the happiness which we had forfeited by disobedience; and the sinner who believes, aims at the enjoyment of a complete and everlasting salvation. But the whole effect of pardon is to deliver a criminal from punishment; it does not reinstate him in the favour of his prince. Were nothing more, therefore, included in justification than the pardon of sin, this privilege might be enjoyed, while at the same time the person was destitute of a title to heaven. Perhaps the reason that some theological writers are so eager to confine justification to the remission of sins is, that a right to future felicity being still wanting, room may be left for the introduction of works as the procuring cause of it. But Jesus Christ will not share his glory with those whom he saves, nor does he bestow his blessings by halves. Those who are forgiven, are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, and a righteousness is imparted to them which is the foundation of their claim to it. Were a sinner merely pardoned, he would be acquitted, but not properly justified. The law of God would still have a demand upon him, because, although he did not owe the debt of suffering, he would still owe the debt of obedience. The privilege would be incomplete; his state would be imperfect; and although secured against the danger of being cast into hell, he would be in the utmost uncertainty whether he should ever be admitted to the happiness of heaven.

There are two ways in which a man may become righteous. First, he may become righteous by his personal obedience. "He that doeth righteousness," says John, "is righteous."* In this way, Adam would have been righteous, if he had faithfully exerted in the service of God the moral power with which he was endowed. In this way, those angels are righteous who kept their first estate when many of their fellows apostatized, and who are now confirmed in holiness beyond the possibility of failure. In this way, some imagine that fallen man may become righteous, because, in their opinion, he has not lost his original ability to obey; or, if it is in some degree impaired, God has lowered his demands to meet our infirmity. Secondly, a man may become righteous by imputation. If he cannot himself fulfil the law, another, taking his place, and coming under his obligations, may fulfil it in his name; and the obedience of this surety may be placed to his account. Jesus Christ, for example, might become the representative of all mankind, or of a portion of mankind, and, by obeying the precepts of the law in their stead, might bring an everlasting righteousness, which should be reckoned to them as the ground of their justification.

The justification of a sinner must be founded, either upon his personal righteousness, or upon the righteousness of Christ. The grand question is, to which of these is he indebted for acceptance with God?

The Apostle Paul repeatedly declares, "that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." I have no doubt that his meaning was distinctly apprehended by those whom he addressed; but the spirit of controversy has endeavoured to involve it in obscurity, and even to put a sense upon his words directly contrary to what he certainly intended. It has been asked, of what law does he speak? and what are the works which he excludes from justification? By the law, some understand the ceremonial law: and their design in so limiting it, is to prove that, notwithstanding the express exclusion of works, we may be justified, in part, at least, by our obedience to the moral precepts. But to suppose Paul to have used so many arguments as are brought forward in his epistles, to show that we are not justified by the works of the ceremonial law, is to represent him as having spent much time and labour in vain; for there is no evidence that there were any persons in his days, who imagined that eternal life could be gained by ceremonial observances alone. It is plain, from several parts of his writings, that, by the law, he meant the ten commandments which were engraven upon two tables of stone; but, in the more extensive acceptation of the term, it signified the law of Moses, comprehending moral as well as ceremonial precepts, and was the name for the whole system of duties which God had enjoined upon his people by the ministry of that illustrious man. Admitting, then, that the apostle refers to the law of Moses, we have an answer ready to the second question, What works are excluded from justification? All works are excluded, without exception; the works of the first and the second table; moral and ceremonial works; every act of man, performed in obedience to a commandment of God. Nothing is more absurd and perverse, than to ask what works are meant to be excluded, when Paul in twenty places has excluded works in general, without once hinting that he intended only those of a particular kind. The subject is perfectly intelligible to those who are willing to understand; and all the difficulties and objections which have been started, arise from aversion to his doctrine.

In proving that a man cannot be justified by the works of the law, we may begin by observing, that the point is determined by this single consideration, that he is a sinner, and that his present conduct, however dutiful, cannot compensate for his past disobedience. He is bound to obey, every moment of his life; and consequently, the obedience which he now performs, being due by a prior obligation, cannot, as if it were a free gift or gratuitous service, cancel the debt which he had formerly contracted. There is not a single sentence of Scripture which authorises us to think, that, if a man who has transgressed shall return to his duty, his past offences will be overlooked. Such an idea is contrary to common sense, and to the express sanction of the law. "The soul that sinneth it shall die."* Hence we see, that by works alone justification is impossible. The utmost which the opponents of our doctrine can plead for, is, that our justification is in part owing to our works. The fact, that all men are guilty, demonstrates that some expedient must be found to appease our offended Creator, and that we must be indebted to something more efficacious than our repentance and amendment of life for the pardon of our sins. But, passing this difficulty which meets us at the outset, I observe, that the obedience which the law of God demands is so high, that he must be miserably ignorant of the present state of human nature, who imagines that any of the descendants of Adam is able to perform it.

First, The law demands obedience to all its precepts.—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." It is thus that Paul quotes these words of Moses, "Cursed is he that confirmeth not the words of this law, to do them."† The chief difference is, that the word "all" is inserted by the apostle; but the original passage implies universal obedience, as well as the quotation. The law is a declaration of the will of the supreme Lord, and the authority which enacted it, extends alike to all its precepts. Whatever duty is enjoined in the law, there is the same reason for performing it as for performing any other, namely, the command of the lawgiver. If a single duty is omitted the law is not fulfilled; and so high is this matter carried, that the Scripture declares, that "he who offendeth in one point, is guilty of

* John iii. 7.

* Ezek. xviii. 20. † Gal. iii. 10. Deut. xxvii. 26.

all."* He virtually subverts all the precepts by the violation of one; for, by disowning the Divine authority in this instance, he in fact disowns it in every instance. All the precepts depend upon the will of the Lawgiver; and, if his will is not a sufficient reason for obedience in one case, it cannot be a sufficient reason in another. Our claim, then, to the favour of God will be invalidated by omission, as well as by positive transgression; and it is preposterous to dream of making one duty a compensation for another. The law admits of no lower terms. We must give all or nothing. We may now ask the man who seeks to be justified by works, whether he thinks himself able to comply with this demand? whether he has always performed his duty in its full extent? whether he has never neglected it, or forgotten it, or omitted it through ignorance; for ignorance, let it be remembered, is not an excuse unless it be invincible. If God has published his law, and we through inattention and carelessness are unacquainted with its contents, our ignorance is voluntary, and we shall in vain hope for impunity. Although a man may have done many things, yet, if he have not done every thing, his plea is lost; for, to justify him in such circumstances would be to declare falsely, that he has fulfilled the whole law, while in truth he has fulfilled only a part of it.

Secondly, The law demands obedience absolutely perfect. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."† This is the sum of the law, and the standard of our duty. It requires such love to God as is worthy of him who is infinitely excellent and good; the highest love of which our nature is capable; love not merely sincere, but perfect; love which not only prevails over opposite affections, but extinguishes them, and reigns alone in the heart. It is inconsistent with the perfection of this love, that it should ever lean towards any rival, that it should be suspended for a single moment, that it should abate and languish in its exercise. The law is violated by the slightest remission of its intensity, or by the temporary cessation of its activity in producing the proper fruits and expressions of it. The love to our fellow men which is required, is equally perfect. We must love our neighbour as ourselves; if not with a love exactly of the same degree, yet certainly of equal sincerity; desiring his welfare as we desire our own, and willingly exerting ourselves to promote it. A regard to our own interests is not to be laid aside; but it must be so moderated as not to degenerate into selfishness. Not only hatred and malice are transgressions of the law, but even indifference to our brethren; nay, it is violated not only by indifference, but by a love not sufficiently ardent, and by efforts not sufficiently vigorous for their good. In short, the law demands not only the form, but the spirit of obedience. It demands in every act of obedience, the full exertion of all the moral power with which we were originally endowed by our Creator. There must be no languid endeavours, no cold and feeble services. No motives must influence our minds but the right ones; no ultimate end must be proposed but the glory of God. Nothing must be wanting in matter or in manner, in external actions or in internal principles; for a deficiency in the measure or degree of our obedience, would prove fatal to our hopes. Enough, I presume, has been said to show that no man can be justified by the works of the law.

I shall add, however, in the last place, that the law demands an uninterrupted course of obedience to the end of our lives. In the case of Adam, the time of trial was limited and probably would have soon terminated. But in our case, I know of no limitation; there is no period within the bounds of our mortal existence at which we might claim the reward. Every day calls for new labour; every year extends the term of our service, and multiplies the probabilities of a failure; it is only when the shades of evening descend, that man finishes his task and retires to rest. We must not therefore think that we have attained, and are already perfect; but, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, we must press towards the mark, if we would bear away the prize of immortality. This we must do, notwithstanding our natural disposition to grow weary of every exercise which is long continued, and in the face of many discouragements and temptations, calculated to divert our attention from our duty, to seduce our affections, and to create impatience of restraint. Should these causes overcome our resolution; should we suspend our services for a time ever so short; should we begin to faint, or even admit a wish to be released from our obligations, we should immediately become criminal in the eye of the law, and forfeit all claim to the expected recompence. He who runs a race will not be crowned, although he run well, unless he reach the goal.

The plan of justification by works appears to be absolutely impracticable. The labour is difficult, and man is weak and inconstant. If we take into the account the strength and waywardness of his passions, his liableness to error, the obstacles which lie in his way, and the numerous causes by which his attention may be diverted from his duty, disgust and weariness may be created, and opposite considerations may obtain a predominant influence upon his mind, we shall be convinced of the probability, or rather the certainty, that he will fail, not in one instance only, but in a thousand. There is no man that liveth and sinneth not in deed, or word, or thought. Besides the invincible difficulties attendant upon this plan of justification, it is in itself comfortless, and a source of continual anxiety to every person who in earnest attempts it. No such thing is possible as the assurance of hope; his mind is a stranger to the peace and joy which arise from the belief of the record of the Gospel, because a fear must always haunt him, that, after all his pains, he shall in some unpropitious hour lose his labour. "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it."* The spirit, therefore, by which he is necessarily animated, is a spirit of bondage, which from its nature destroys the value of his obedience by converting it into the task of a slave, who toils under the dread of the lash.

In an inquiry, whether it is possible to be justified by works, it was necessary to ascertain what are the requisitions of the law. The law is the standard of works; and if they are not conformable to it, the hopes founded upon them are vain. The question is not, What measure of obedience we are disposed to yield, or what measure we are capable of yielding? but, What is the obedience which God requires from us? This we learn from his precepts, fairly and honestly interpreted; and so high is the demand, that every man may justly despair of being able to fulfil it.

But will God be satisfied with nothing less than perfect obedience? Yes, some reply; he has had compassion upon his frail and erring creatures, and is willing to receive them into favour upon easier terms. He has given them a milder law, more suitable to their present condition, which, through the assistance of his grace, they are enabled to obey. This notion,

* James ii. 10. † Matt. xxii. 37—39.

* Ezek. xxxiii. 13.

which is exceedingly prevalent, and by which the scriptural doctrine of justification is subverted, will be examined in the next lecture.

LECTURE LXX.

JUSTIFICATION.

Ground of Justification continued; not Repentance and Sincere Obedience—Righteousness of Christ, the sole ground—Observations on the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness to Believers.

In the preceding lecture, I showed you that justification is a legal term, and denotes the sentence pronounced by a judge upon a person who has been brought before him for judgment. If the person is righteous in himself, the sentence merely ascertains and declares in a judicial manner what he is; but in the case of men who are standing before the tribunal of God, a different process is necessary. As they are unquestionably guilty, an act of grace must be passed in their favour, cancelling the obligation to punishment; and, accordingly, the remission of sins is an essential part of our justification. But this is not all. The acquitted criminal is not necessarily restored to the favour of his prince, and entitled to the reward which was promised to an obedient subject. Pardon frees the sinner from the pains of hell, but gives him no right to the happiness of heaven. He must somehow be possessed of a complete righteousness, which shall answer all the demands of the law, that he may be accepted by his Maker, and obtain the eternal inheritance.

It may be proper by the way to remark, that our common language on this subject may give rise to misapprehension. We often speak of the pardon of sin, and the possession of a justifying righteousness, as if they were distinct; and hence it may be supposed, that the one might be enjoyed without the other. This is the inference suggested, when it is sometimes inaccurately stated, that justification consists in the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of righteousness. But the truth is, that the imputation of righteousness is the foundation of pardon, as well as of restoration to the favour of God. The righteousness of Christ, although it is strictly one and cannot be divided, is distinguished, for the sake of explanation, into active and passive; the former denoting his obedience to the precepts, and the latter his endurance of the penalty. There is an imputation of his whole righteousness to the believer, and, in the language of scholastic theology, it is the material cause of our justification. These remarks have led me to anticipate a subsequent department of the doctrine; but I deemed it necessary to make them at this time, to guard against any misapprehension of what I have said, that more than pardon is necessary to the sinner, and that he must be possessed of a complete righteousness, a righteousness corresponding to the precept, as well as to the penalty, in order to his being accepted by his Maker.

It is therefore an important question, how this righteousness may be obtained; and there are only two ways in which it can be conceived to be acquired; by our personal obedience, or by the imputation of the righteousness of another. I have endeavoured to prove, that the attainment of it in the first way is impossible, by showing you that the demands of the law are so extensive that no man living can comply with them. It requires obedience to all its precepts, without a single exception; obedience absolutely perfect, a failure in one act, or in the motive from which it is performed, being sufficient to invalidate the whole; and obedience continued to the end of life, because no prior term is fixed, and it is after death that the final judgment will take place. To every person who considers the extent of these demands, it will appear as impossible for the descendants of Adam, in their present state of weakness and depravity, to fulfil them, as it is to remove mountains by a word, or to ascend to heaven by a wish. The notion of sinless perfection as attainable in this life, which has been broached in modern times, could arise only in minds disordered by enthusiasm, or blinded by profound ignorance of human nature, and the Divine law.

I might therefore proceed to show you that we are justified by the righteousness of another, did not a new obstacle present itself, which it is necessary to remove out of the way. The pride of the human heart, unwilling to forego its claims to the favour of God, has exerted its ingenuity in devising a method of evading the force of the argument founded on the high demands of the law. It is granted, we are told, that we are unable to fulfil them; but it is added, that the original terms upon which eternal life was promised are relaxed. God has been graciously pleased, for the sake of Christ, to make a new covenant with us, in which he promises to pardon our sins upon repentance, and since we cannot perform perfect, to accept of sincere obedience as the ground of our justification. This doctrine is laid down in a variety of terms, and with greater or less degrees of plainness; but I have stated the substance of what is maintained by Divines of a particular class. To give it the more plausibility, it is acknowledged, that still our salvation is of grace, because there is grace displayed in lowering the demands of the law, and grace is communicated to assist us; although it turns out to be such aid as we may use or not, as we please, and as will be of little avail without vigorous exertions of our own. It is also acknowledged, that we are under high obligations to our Saviour, in consequence of whose mediation this new law has been given, and what may be wanting in our obedience is supplied by his merit. The scheme, however, is manifestly an attempt to establish our own righteousness, from a reluctance to submit to the righteousness of God. It is a miserable mixture of the law and the gospel, an illicit association of the righteousness of Christ and that of the sinner, an abortive effort to defend the doctrine of justification by works, against the solemn denunciations of Scripture. Upon this scheme I make the following remarks:

First, There is not the slightest vestige of it to be found in the Scriptures. I challenge any man to point out a passage in which it is declared, that Christ merited that we might merit; that since we cannot be justified by perfect, we shall be justified by imperfect obedience; or that God has given an easier law, adapted to the present condition of human nature. These are dogmas of very great importance, as they relate to our everlasting concerns, and they would need to be supported by evidence perfectly satisfactory; but when we call for it, we are put off with bold assertions and sophistical arguments. We read of our being constituted righteous, but it is by a righteousness which is not our own, nor of the law, but the righteousness of another, namely, Christ. "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."* We read of a new covenant which God has made with men, but it is truly a covenant of grace, for it is a covenant of promise. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."† Where do we read of a new covenant of

* Rom. v. 19. † Heb. viii. 10—12.

works, in which sincere obedience is the condition, and eternal life is the recompence? It exists only in the writings of some men, who cannot or will not understand the gospel of Christ.

Secondly, The idea of such a new law as has been described, is fraught with absurd and impious consequences. It reflects the greatest dishonour upon the law which was originally given to man. It sets aside its demands, although they were not arbitrary, but were founded on the nature of God and man, and the relations subsisting between them; it pronounces them to be unreasonable in the present circumstances of human nature, and makes the authority of the law give way for the accommodation of the criminal. It is in fact an abrogation of the law, than which a greater dishonour cannot be conceived; for the new law of which we speak is totally different from the original law, no two things being more different than a law which requires perfect, and a law which is fully satisfied with sincere obedience. The supposed change implies a reflection not only upon the law, but upon the Lawgiver. When first delivered to man, the law was a representation of the holiness of his Maker, a glass which brightly reflected the infinite purity of his nature; and his language by it was, "Be thou holy, for I am holy." How can we conceive a change to have taken place in its requisitions, and at the same time believe that its Author continues the same? Must we not conclude, that if he demands less holiness from his creatures he is himself less holy? He can bear now certain imperfections which he formerly condemned; he is pleased if we love him in some degree, although we do not love him with all our strength and soul; he is content if we have some portion of good-will to our neighbour, although we do not love him exactly as ourselves. If we really wish to do our duty, it is enough; we shall obtain his approbation should we fail in the performance, and the intention will be accepted for the deed. That strictness which called for "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over," no longer exists; that opposition to sin which rejected an action upon which the slightest stain was found, has given place to a more accommodating temper. In short, we do not recognise in the Author of this milder law, the Being who published the decalogue from Sinai. Besides, the doctrine which we are considering, gives a false and unfavourable view of the mediation of Christ. "Think not," he said, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."* That it was not the ceremonial law which he meant, or the ceremonial law alone, is evident from his subsequent vindication of the moral precepts from the corruptions of tradition. "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven."† But notwithstanding this solemn admonition, we must conclude that he did come to destroy the law, if we give credit to those who affirm, that in consequence of his mediation, a lower degree of obedience is accepted. The first law would not be pleased with our obedience unless it were absolutely perfect; the second is satisfied if it is simply sincere. The first therefore has been set aside to make room for the second, as the edict of an absolute prince claiming the whole property of his subjects, would be repealed by the publication of another, in which he asserted his right only to the half. Jesus Christ, according to this hypothesis, has made that which was once duty to be no longer duty, and that which was once sin to be no longer sin. What is this in the opinion of every man, who believes that the law of God, being founded in the nature of things, is immutable, but to represent Jesus Christ as the minister of unrighteousness? We may conclude from these reflections, that the doctrine of a new law which accepts of sincere obedience as the ground of our justification, is a vain and unhallowed attempt to build again what the gospel had destroyed.

In the last place, The sincere obedience of believers is expressly excluded from being the ground of their justification. If all works are rejected, sincere but imperfect works must share the common fate; for we are not at liberty to make a distinction in their favour. When the Apostle Paul rejects the works of the law without limitation, he certainly rejects sincere obedience, which consists in works of the law, or it would not be obedience at all. This argument is decisive till it be proved that there are two laws, the one requiring perfect, and the other imperfect obedience, and that only the works of the former are discarded. But the truth is, that the works, concerning which the Scripture affirms that a man cannot be justified by them, are the very works for which some men so strenuously contend. It is a palpable absurdity to suppose that they are perfect works, for these are the works which were originally required, and they would now undoubtedly be as acceptable to God and beneficial to the performer as ever. Unless we conceive them to be such works as man may be supposed able to perform, all the elaborate reasoning on the subject is a mere waste of time and labour. Now, no man expects to be justified by perfect obedience to the law, for no man in his senses imagines himself to be capable of such obedience. It is what is called sincere obedience, which Paul had in view in the declaration so often repeated, that "by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Such was the obedience in which the Galatians trusted. Imperfectly as they understood the dispensation of grace, they were not so ignorant as to dream that they could fulfil the high demands of the law: and they must have rested their hope upon such works as were understood to be within the compass of their ability, upon their honest and persevering endeavours to do their duty. What were the works which Paul renounced, when, in reference to his present as well as his past attainments, he said, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith?"* And what were the works to which he referred when he said, "for I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified?"† They were manifestly all his works without exception, and consequently works performed in faith and love, works performed with the assistance of grace; or in other words, that sincere obedience which some men would obtrude upon us as our justifying righteousness, but in which he was so far from confiding, that he utterly disclaimed it, and earnestly desired to be found in the righteousness of Christ.

We see, then, that the notion of a new law, which requires only sincere obedience as the ground of our acceptance with God, is utterly untenable. It would have been long since exploded, if the Scriptures had been understood, and admitted as the supreme judge of religious controversies; and its prevalence is owing to the ignorance of those who teach, and those who receive it, and to the strong disposition, which only almighty grace can subdue, to arrogate to ourselves the glory of our salvation.

I shall subjoin two or three general remarks in cor-

* Matt. v. 17. † Ib. 19.

* Philip. iii. 8, 9. †1 Cor. iv. 4.

roboration of the preceding reasoning, before I leave this part of the subject.

First, If men are justified by works, no adequate reason can be assigned for the mission of Christ. It is acknowledged that we are indebted to him for paving the way for our acceptance with our Maker, and facilitating the attainment of his favour; but surely some less costly expedient might have been devised to give efficacy to our repentance and our duties, if this was all that was wanted. If man could have fulfilled the demands of the law, Christ would not have been sent to yield obedience to its precepts; and to suppose it to have been his design to lower its terms, and to render a less degree of holiness sufficient, as the condition of future happiness, is to represent the effect of his mission to have been the virtual subversion of the moral government of God. Was this the purpose for which he descended to the earth? The doctrine which lessens the necessity of the mediation of Christ, or would lead us to consider it as only supplementary to human exertions, is manifestly contrary to the Scriptures, in which his mediation is represented as the foundation that supports the whole superstructure of the religion of sinners. This argument is employed by Paul—"If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."*

In the second place, The doctrine of justification by works, in any form, obscures the glory of the grace of God. This argument also is used by the Apostle—"If it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work."† It is strange that some men should labour, with so much ingenuity and perseverance, to reconcile two things which are declared to be irreconcilable, and destructive of each other. The glory of grace consists in giving freely, or, as it is expressed in the prophet—"without money and without price;" what is obtained by works, is granted in consideration of previous service, and is the payment of a debt. According to the doctrine of justification by the old or the new law, the question which Paul presumed would put all men to silence, may be answered by thousands: "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"‡ 'I have given to God,' every justified person might say, 'and I am entitled to the reward which I enjoy.' Few, perhaps, would venture to express themselves in a manner so ill befitting creatures and sinners; but this is the language of the system. How contrary are the sentiments and feelings of which it is a faithful interpreter to the design of God in our redemption, "that he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus!"‖

In the last place, Justification by works lays the foundation of boasting. "If Abraham," says Paul, "were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory;" and although he adds, "but not before God,"§ yet the human heart does not stop at this limit, but proceeds to glory even in his presence. We have an example in the self-righteous Pharisee, who, standing by himself, had the presumption to say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men;" and followed this boast with a catalogue of his good deeds. He who had been justified by works, might say, 'My own arm has achieved my salvation.' He might, indeed, with the Pharisee, thank God, acknowledging in words that he was indebted to his assistance for his virtuous actions; but we know that, when man attempts to divide the honour with his Maker, he always takes the larger share to himself. To suppose that, in delivering us from the misery in which pride had involved us, God would adopt a method calculated to foster that odious principle, is to represent him as having acted with less caution than one would ascribe to a man of ordinary prudence. The design of redemption is to stain the pride of human glory, to bring man to the throne of grace as a humble supplicant, to make him feel and acknowledge that he owes every thing to unmerited goodness. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith."* As it is evident from these words, that the law of works encourages boasting, it follows, that we are not justified by that law in any form, and that the ground of our justification is neither our perfect nor our imperfect obedience.

Having proved that our own works have no place in our justification before God, we have prepared the way for showing that we owe this important privilege to the righteousness of Christ, This is the doctrine of our church; and that it is agreeable to Scripture, we can demonstrate by a multiplicity of proofs. In the Old Testament, the name under which the Messiah was foretold is, "the Lord our Righteousness." It was predicted by Daniel, that he was "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." And in another prophet, we find these words, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." Once more, Isaiah says, "By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities;"† plainly intimating that, in consequence of his atonement for their sins, they should be pardoned and restored to the Divine favour, through faith founded on the revelation of him in the Gospel. In the New Testament, the doctrine is delivered with still greater clearness. It is there declared, that "he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" that "he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" that, in the Gospel, "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith;" that, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness;" that, "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;" that, "by the righteousness of one, the free gift comes upon all men unto justification of life;" that "we are forgiven for his sake;" and that "we are accepted in the Beloved."‡ The same doctrine is taught by Paul, in the words formerly quoted, when he expresses his earnest desire "to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which was of the law; but that which is by the faith of Christ;" and in all the passages which affirm that "we are not justified by works, but by faith;" for the object of that faith is Christ, as having obeyed and suffered in our room.

What the righteousness of Christ is, I explained in my lectures on the Covenant of Grace,‖ of which it was shown to be the condition. Our own righteousness signifies our conformity to the law of God, and the word has the same meaning when used in reference to him. He was made under the law which we had violated, and by which we were condemned, that as our Surety he might fulfil its demands. From us it required perfect obedience to its precepts, for this was its enactment, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;"§ and such obedience he yielded from the commencement to the close of his life. No man could convict him of sin, and the all-seeing eye of his Father beheld him with unqualified approbation: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Al-

* Gal. ii. 21. † Rom. xi. 6. ‡ Ib. 35. ‖ Eph. ii. 7. § Rom. iv. 2.

* Rom. iii. 27.

† Jer. xxiii. 6. Dan. ix. 24. Isa. xlv. 24, 25. Isa. liii. 11.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 21. Rom. x. 4. i. 17. iv. 5. v. 18, 19. Eph. iv. 32, i. 6. ‖ Lecture 49. § Matt. xix. 17.

though he owed obedience to the moral law for himself as a man, because his human nature, being a creature, was necessarily subject to the authority of God, yet he did not owe obedience to it in the form of a covenant prescribing it as the condition of life, and in the circumstances of humiliation and affliction in which it was performed. Besides, we might say, that on the same ground on which the obedience of Adam, although he owed it for himself, would have been available to procure eternal happiness to his posterity, the obedience of Christ was available to obtain a right to the promised reward to all whom he represented. We must, indeed, ascribe a far greater value to it than to the obedience of Adam, when we recollect that the merit of an action increases in proportion to the dignity of the person who performs it, and that he who obeyed in our room was not only a holy man, but the Son of the living God.

But the consideration which more satisfactorily shows how the obedience of Christ could be imputed to men, is this, that it was strictly gratuitous. Having become a creature, he was necessarily subject to the law, which binds all the inhabitants of heaven and earth; but then it should be remembered that his becoming a creature was a matter of choice. We come into being and are placed under the law without our consent; but Jesus Christ existed before his incarnation, and assumed our nature by his own spontaneous act. "Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will."* Such language no other person could have used, because it implies a liberty to act or not to act, which no mere man possesses. He placed himself under the law; but although the law had henceforth a right to demand his obedience, yet its claim was founded solely on his own voluntary deed. If he had not consented, it could not have reckoned him among his subjects. He was made under the law by being made of a woman; but we know, that while we are passively partakers of flesh and blood, he actively took part of the same. His obedience was, therefore, a free-will offering. It was an offering which he might have withheld, by declining to come into those circumstances in which only obedience could be expected from him. As he did not owe it to any prior obligation, you perceive that it possessed positive merit, and that, as it was not at all necessary for himself, it could be imputed to others, or so reckoned to them, that they should be rewarded for it. But the law required something more than obedience from him. Those for whom he acted were sinners, and it was necessary that he should expiate their guilt by enduring the penalty, because, till this were done, the demands of the law would not be satisfied, and consequently its righteousness would not be fulfilled. He therefore submitted to be born in a humble condition, to lead a life of poverty and sorrow, and to close his course by a painful, ignominious, and accursed death. As death was the penalty demanded by the law, our redemption is ascribed to his sufferings on the cross. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree."† "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."‡ Thus the law obtained from him all that it demanded from us. Its precepts were obeyed, and its penalty was executed. The obedience and sufferings of Christ constitute its righteousness. By both he satisfied the claims of the law, and there remained nothing to be exacted from him, or from those to whom he stood in the relation of a Surety.

As our Lord fulfilled this righteousness not for himself but for sinners, we perceive upon what ground it is imputed or reckoned to them, so that they are justified on account of it. The reckoning of it to them is the application of it to its proper purpose, the accomplishment of the design which he had in view in obeying and suffering. It is not in every case warrantable to illustrate the Divine procedure by human transactions: "God's ways are often not as our ways, neither are his thoughts as our thoughts." Yet, when we are thinking of his moral attributes, we must conceive of them as analogous to the corresponding qualities in ourselves, free, however, from the limitations and imperfections with which all our virtues are attended. Justice in him must resemble justice in us, although its proceedings may sometimes be above our comprehension, as it is exercised under the direction of an infinite understanding. Now, it is acknowledged to be consistent with justice, that one man should, in certain circumstances, sustain the person of another, act in his name, and procure benefits to him by his services. We cannot, therefore, charge God with injustice for doing what is frequently done by ourselves, is sanctioned by our laws, and is admitted by all men to be perfectly fair and right. Nothing is more common than suretyship; and the actions of the surety are rendered to the person for whom he is bound, as if they had been performed by the person himself. If, then, one man may pay a debt for another, and be punished for another, as happens in the forfeiture of bail or security for the appearance of a person in a civil or criminal process, and may perform a service of which another is to reap the advantage, on what ground can an objection be raised against the interposition of our Saviour to satisfy the demands of the law, which we were unable to answer? If the Supreme Lawgiver, who alone knows what is fit to be done, what is suitable to his character and the relation in which he stands to his creatures, what will most effectually secure the honour and authority of his government; if he shall be pleased to accept the obedience and death of his own Son, invested with the character of our surety, instead of our obedience and death, who will presume to arraign this dispensation? And how does substitution, with which no person finds fault in human affairs, become unjust as soon as it is adopted in the Divine administration? It is acknowledged that the sin of Adam is imputed to us; for, whatever wrangling there may be with respect to the extent in which we are affected by it, there are stubborn facts, besides the testimony of Scripture, which will not permit us to deny that it has had some influence upon us, as our moral and physical weakness, our diseases and mortality. And who will have the audacity to say that this imputation is unjust? It is surely, then, equally agreeable to justice, that the righteousness of Christ should be imputed to us for our deliverance from the guilt, and all the fatal consequences of the sin, of the first man; that, as death came by the one, so life should come by the other.

The imputation of righteousness to a sinner, is the act of God as a judge: "It is God that justifieth." "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works."* The sinner who appears before his tribunal might be condemned, since he is destitute of the righteousness which the law requires; but by an act of grace, God gives him this righteousness which answers its demands, and on this ground pronounces him to be just. It was by his appointment that the surety fulfilled this righteousness for him; and it is by his judicial act that it is so reckoned to him, that he enjoys the full pardon of his sins, and a right to eternal life.

The imputation of the righteousness of Christ is founded in union to him. It is the consequence of the legal relation which was established between him and his people in the convenant of grace, by which he was constituted their surety, and his acts in this character were made referrible to them. His righteousness thus became imputable to them; and it is actually imputed when a real union is formed between them by

* Ps. xl. 7, 8. † 1 Pet. ii. 24. ‡ Rev. v. 9.

* Rom. viii. 33. iv. 6, 8.

the Spirit, and by faith. They thus acquire an interest in every thing which belongs to him as their surety, as a woman acquires a right to the privileges and property of her husband by marriage. It is with a view to this union, which was formerly explained, that we are said to be blessed in him with all spiritual blessings.*

The Hebrew word חשׁב and the Greek word λογιζομαι sometimes signify the reckoning to a person of what really is his own. Thus, Shimei prayed that David would not "impute iniquity" to him; that is,† would not lay the sin which he had committed to his charge, and punish him for it. In like manner, it is said concerning a summary act of justice, which Phinehas had performed, that "it was counted unto him for righteousness."‡ The meaning plainly is, that it was esteemed a righteous act, for which he was commended and rewarded with "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood." But the word also signifies to reckon something to a person which he has not done, as if he had done it. Thus, Paul says to Philemon concerning Onesimus, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought," — τουτο εμοι ελλογει — "put that on mine account;"‖ impute it to me; hold me responsible for it, as if it were my own deed. It is in this sense that the word is used in reference to the justification of a sinner.

It is certain, from the passages formerly quoted, that the righteousness of Christ is placed to the account of the believing sinner, so that he is pardoned and accepted. Now, it is evident, that it is only by imputation that his righteousness can become ours. No such thing is possible, as the transference of moral qualities from one person to another, or the communication of holiness from one who is pure to one who is impure. We cannot be made honest by the honesty of another, or benevolent by the benevolence of another, or patient by the patience of another. These are personal qualities; and unless they be formed in our own minds, unless they have their root and growth there, we must remain dishonest, selfish, and fretful. The virtues which an individual possesses can have no influence upon those around him except by the force of example. But we may be freed from a debt by the payment of a surety, and entitled to a reward for the meritorious services which a friend has performed for us; and when a discharge is granted in the one case, and a recompense is bestowed in the other, it may be said that the deed of the surety, or of the friend, is imputed to us. The acts are theirs; but as they were performed on our account, we enjoy the benefits of them.

From these remarks, you will perceive how Jesus Christ is "made of God unto us righteousness."§ It is not by the transfusion of his holiness into our souls, for we have already shown that justification does not change our nature, but our state; but by such an assignation of his merit to us as avails to procure the pardon of our sins, and our restoration to the favour of God. In speaking upon this subject, it is common to say that his righteousness is reckoned to us as if it were our own; that it is as truly accounted ours as if we ourselves had performed it; that we are as righteous as if we had fulfilled the whole law. These are popular expressions, which require to be properly explained, or there is a danger that we shall be led into error. They are apt to suggest the idea of an actual transference of the righteousness of Christ to believers, in consequence of which it becomes literally theirs, as the garment of one man becomes, by his gift, the property of another. They may suggest the idea that his righteousness passes from himself to the sinner; and hence the inference seems to be, that he has parted with it, as a man does not retain what he has given away. But a little attention will convince us that this is not an accurate notion of imputation; and the reflection, that we are speaking of a spiritual transaction, will be a preservative from gross and material conceptions. The righteousness of Christ must ever be inherent in himself, and it can be imparted to others only in a legal sense. Imputation is the act of God, whose judgment is according to truth; and who cannot, therefore, account those to be personally righteous whom he knows to be personally guilty. But he may treat them as if they were righteous, in consideration of the righteousness of another. He may pardon their sins, and receive them into favour, and give them a title to eternal life; and in these things justification consists. This is all that can be distinctly understood to be implied in imputation; if you patiently and attentively meditate on the subject, you will find that this is the only sense in which the righteousness of the Redeemer becomes ours. It is ours, because, on account of it, God deals with us as if we were righteous in ourselves; but he cannot look upon us as really righteous, because the contrary is true, any more than we can look on a person as really meritorious, who is rewarded for the merit of another. When a surety pays a debt, the debtor is discharged, but he is not rendered personally solvent. The sole effect of the deed of his surety is to place him in the same situation, in respect of his creditor, in which he would have stood if he had been able with his own property to fulfil his obligations. Considered in himself, and in the eyes of all around him, he is a bankrupt. To be really righteous, and to be righteous by imputation, or, in the language of our church, to be accepted as righteous, are, I presume, two things exceedingly different. Jesus Christ himself is truly, and in the strictest sense, righteous; but those who believe in him are only accounted righteous.

I believe, indeed, that this distinction has not been always attended to; and that, by many, something more is understood to be implied in imputation, although they are unable to give a satisfactory explanation of their meaning. An idea seems to be entertained, that the righteousness of Christ is so attached to the persons of believers, that it is as truly their own property as is a man's personal righteousness. Justification is a legal act, and must be conceived as analogous to other legal acts of a similar nature. But there is no imputation in law of the deed of one man to another, except in the sense already explained. Having been performed for him, it is so accounted to him, that he enjoys all the advantages which would have accrued to him if it had been performed by himself. The law never supposes that he actually performed it, but accepts the performance by another, as equivalent to his own. Now, apply these things to the subject before us, and you will perceive that the imputation of the righteousness of Christ does not consist in accounting us in any sense righteous in ourselves, but in treating us, for his sake, as if we were righteous. What he did and suffered, he did and suffered for his people; and when they claim an interest by faith in his vicarious acts, they are dealt with, from respect to those acts, as if they had themselves obeyed the precepts and satisfied the penalty. In this sense they are righteous, that their surety has fulfilled all the demands of the law, and left nothing to be demanded from them. It has received from him every thing which it might have exacted from them.

I have endeavoured to prove, that the meritorious cause of our justification before God is not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ. Works are excluded in every form. No qualification is sought for or regarded in the sinner; God looks upon him as utterly unworthy in himself, and shows favour to him

* Eph. i. 3. † 2 Sam. xix. 19. ‡ Ps. cvi. 31. ‖ Philem. 18. § 1 Cor. i. 30,

solely for the sake of Christ, in whom he believes. Thus his design is accomplished, that "no flesh should glory in his presence."* There is not left to the justified person the shadow of a ground on which he might claim any honour to himself, or pretence that he had acted a subordinate part in his salvation, as we shall see more fully in the next lecture, when we consider faith as the appointed means of obtaining this privilege.

The Scripture declares, that we are "justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ."† It would be granted, it might be said, that we are justified by grace, if God pardoned our sins upon our repentance without an atonement, and accepted our imperfect instead of perfect obedience. But how does grace appear according to the doctrine which has now been delivered? The blessing is strictly due to us; the full price has been paid for it; and, properly, justification should be considered as an act of justice. But to this objection the answer is easy. In one view, God is just when he justifies the ungodly man who believes in Jesus; for every demand upon him has been satisfied, and, consequently, the privilege could no more be withheld from him, than a discharge can be withheld from a debtor after his surety has made full payment of his debt. But, let it be remembered, that those who are justified possess in themselves no claim to the blessing. They have made no atonement for their sins, and performed no obedience to entitle them to the reward. They did not even provide a surety to do for them what they could not do for themselves; but God called him to the office. In every view, they are utterly unworthy of his favour; and hence, although their justification may be an act of justice in respect of the Saviour, it is an act of pure grace in respect of them. They are merely recipients of a privilege, which was obtained for them without their concurrence, and for which they give nothing in exchange. They are freely forgiven and accepted, and are thus laid under eternal obligations. Of this they are deeply sensible; and, accordingly, say with the Psalmist, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."‡

A question has been proposed, which is of no practical use, and has been dictated by idle speculation and vain curiosity, Whether the whole righteousness of Christ is imputed to every believer, or only so much of it as will answer all the demands of the law upon him? If we must answer this question, we may do so by asking another: Whether, when a surety pays the debt of twenty persons at the same time, the whole sum is reckoned to each individual, or only that part of it which corresponds to the sum which he owed to his creditor? It is possible that this question might be perplexed with a variety of refinements and subtile distinctions; but it would not be worth while to bestow a moment's attention upon them. It is of no consequence what sentiments men adopt upon a point of this nature. It is not in such niceties that true wisdom consists. The inquiry will appear exceedingly uninteresting to a sinner who is anxious to learn how he may obtain peace with his offended Creator; and he will be content to know in general, that, if he believe in Jesus Christ, he shall enjoy the full benefit of his mediation.

I conclude with two quotations from the fathers. The first is taken from the writings of Justin Martyr; and in the following words, from his epistle to Diognetus, the doctrine of justification through the righteousness of Christ is concisely and perspicuously delivered: "God gave his own Son a ransom for us, the holy one for the transgressors, the innocent for the wicked, the righteous for the unrighteous, the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. For what else could cover our sins but his righteousness? In whom could we transgressors and ungodly be justified, but only in the Son of God? O sweet exchange! O unsearchable contrivance! that the transgressions of many should be hidden in one righteous person, and the righteousness of one should justify many transgressors!"

I shall add a quotation from Chrysostom on the fifth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "What mind can represent these things? He made the righteous one a sinner, that he might make the sinners righteous. Rather this is not what he says, but something much greater. He does not say he made him a sinner, but sin; not only him who had not sinned, but who did not know sin, that we might be made, not righteous, but righteousness, and the righteousness of God. For this is the righteousness of God, when we are justified not by works, for in this case it is necessary that there should be no spot in them, but by grace, in the blotting out of all sin. This does not permit us to be lifted up, because God freely gives us all, and teaches us the greatness of the gift; for the former righteousness is that of the law and of works, but this is the righteousness of God." From these passages it appears, that, although the fathers do not always express themselves with the same accuracy as modern theologians, whom controversial discussion has led to a more careful selection of language, yet the scriptural doctrine of justification was understood and taught, long before the days of Luther and Calvin.

LECTURE LXXI.

JUSTIFICATION.

Office of Faith in Justification—Whether it precedes or follows Justification—Definition of it—Faith not the Ground or Condition of Justification, but the Instrument of Partaking of it—The Relation of Repentance and Good Works to Justification.

Although Jesus Christ fulfilled the righteousness of the law during his abode upon earth, yet those for whom he acted as a surety, are not immediately delivered from the guilt of their sins, and restored to the favour of God. They are born children of wrath as well as others, and they sometimes continue for many years in a state of condemnation. The righteousness of the Redeemer is not of avail to them till it is applied. I proceed to speak of its application, and remark that, while it is revealed and brought near to us in the Gospel, faith is the means by which it is received, or by which we obtain such an interest in it as to be accepted in the sight of God. God "justifieth the ungodly that believeth in Jesus."

But before I consider the office of faith in justification, it is necessary to attend to the question, whether we are justified before faith or after it; or, "whether the act of God imputing the righteousness of Christ to us, or our receiving it by faith, be first in the order of nature." The question will probably astonish you; but it has actually engaged the attention of some theologians, and given rise to much discussion and metaphysical argumentation. Those who aim at being exceedingly accurate and consummately orthodox, maintain, "that justification, as it is the act of God, is, in the order of nature, antecedent to our faith; and, that our faith is antecedent to it, as it is passively received into, and terminated on, our conscience." The last

*1 Cor. i. 29. †Rom. iii. 24. ‡Ps. cxv. 1.

words I do not well understand; but, if they have any meaning it must be, that the assurance of our justification, and the peace of conscience which flows from it, are posterior to faith. But surely, if men would allow themselves to think, they would see that this assurance is not justification, but a fruit or consequence of it. It follows from this theory, that what has been always understood by justification, is not that which is spoken of in the Scriptures when we are said to be justified by faith, but a certain state of mind closely connected with it. It is not the sentence of God pronounced upon the sinner, but his knowledge and experience of the sentence. It would seem, then, that we have been all along in an error; and that, while we supposed that we became righteous by faith, and gave credit to the Scriptures, which told us that righteousness would be imputed to us if we believed, the matter is transacted in a different manner. We become righteous without faith; righteousness is imputed to us before we believe.

The principal argument by which this opinion is supported, is, that faith is a fruit of the Spirit, and that the Spirit cannot be given to men while they are under the curse of the law, which is not repealed till they are actually justified. The curse is an impenetrable barrier in the way of all gracious communications. But although this seems to be logical reasoning, there are two reasons why I deem it inconclusive. The first is, that, notwithstanding their subjection to the curse, God did love men, and bestow upon them the unspeakable gift of his Son. I should wish to know what there is peculiar in the gift of the Spirit, which should hinder God from giving him till the curse is removed; or how it comes to pass that, while men were under the guilt of sin, God might send his Son to die for them, but cannot send his Spirit to infuse life into their souls. The second reason is, that no reasoning, however plausible, can support any theory in opposition to Scripture. If the Scripture declares, that we are "justified by faith;" that righteousness is imputed to those who believe; and calls the righteousness of Christ, "the righteousness which is by faith," plainly signifying that faith is antecedent; what right has any man to come forward and tell me, that I should beware of being misled by this language, for that this is not the true order of things? God stands in no need of the counsels of men to direct him how to proceed. He knows what he may do consistently with his own character, and the moral constitution of the universe. If he has said, that he justifies a sinner by faith, what signify all the minute reasonings of puny mortals, which go to prove that this is impossible, because there is a sentence against the sinner which must be reversed before the Spirit is given? Did not God know of this difficulty? or, knowing it, did he express himself as if it did not exist? It were well if, in such matters, the interpreters of Scripture would lay aside their logic, and exercise a humble faith, assenting to what is revealed without obtruding their corrections and twisting every thing into an agreement with their systems. And let us all learn to derive our sentiments in religion, not from the subtilties of scholastic divines and their imitators in modern times, but from the writings of the prophets and apostles, whose language, if it should appear to some men not properly guarded, is, however, such as they were directed to use by the Spirit of inspiration.

The opinion which I have endeavoured to expose, is hyper-orthodoxy. As it is contrary to the uniform language of the Scriptures, so it is at variance with the doctrine of our church, which teaches us, that the righteousness of Christ is received by faith; that "faith is the instrument of justification;"* and that, although "God did, from all eternity, decree to justify the elect; and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification; nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ unto them."*

Of the faith by which we are justified, such a definition has been sometimes given as entirely overthrows the doctrine which we have laboured to establish. It is represented not only as a living faith which works by love, but as formally comprehending good works. It justifies us not as faith, or a reliance upon Christ, but as operative in the performance of our duty, and is another name for believing obedience. As this definition is inconsistent with the known and established use of the term, so it confounds faith and works, which the Scriptures most carefully distinguish and oppose to each other in justification, and it renders some of their declarations on the subject unmeaning and absurd. If faith signifies believing obedience, they are convertible terms, and the one may therefore be substituted for the other. Let us then make the exchange in the following passage from the Epistle of James, and observe what is the result: "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."† Observe how the sentence runs. 'Show me thy obedience without thy obedience, and I will show thee my obedience by my obedience.' A most wonderful species of demonstration, surely! and worthy to be proposed with great solemnity by an inspired apostle! In other passages, the substitution of obedience for faith, would produce an equally ridiculous effect.

Justifying faith has been defined to be a persuasion that Christ died for us in particular, and that our sins are forgiven. I have already shown that this view of it is a mistake. Nothing is the object of faith but what is revealed. But there is no revelation in the Scriptures that Christ died for any man in particular, and that his sins are forgiven; and, therefore, to believe these propositions in the first instance, would be downright presumption. Besides, if this were a just definition of faith, if this persuasion entered into its essence, every man would be an unbeliever who never possessed this persuasion, and the moment he lost it would fall from faith. How many of the people of God would be thus excluded from his favour! how few would be in a state of grace! It is not a fair way to evade this difficulty, to say, that faith, like all the other graces, is imperfect, and that the exercise of it may be suspended. However imperfect any thing may be, its essence always remains; and to talk of suspending what is essential to it, is in fact to say that it is annihilated.

I have shown you, in a former lecture,‡ that justifying faith is not only an assent to the testimony of God concerning his Son, but the reliance of the soul upon his atonement and righteousness as the only ground of acceptance with God. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness."‖ I shall not resume the illustration of this point, but shall proceed to state what is the office of faith in the justification of a sinner. Now, faith may be considered as itself our justifying righteousness; or as the condition of our justification; or as the means, and, as it has been often called, the instrument, by which we become partakers of this blessing.

To suppose that faith itself is our justifying righteousness, would be to contradict the language of Scripture, in which we are said to be justified by, or through, faith; an expression which merely imports, that it is somehow connected with the enjoyment of the privilege. None, indeed, will maintain that faith is our justifying righteousness, but those who, contrary to

* Conf. Ch. xi. § 1, 2.

* Conf. Ch. xi. § 4. † James ii. 18. ‡ Lect. lviii.
‖ Rom. x. 10.

the obvious meaning of the word and its constant distinction from works, have first assumed that it is comprehensive of obedience. It may seem to favour this opinion, that it is said of Abraham, that he "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."* The expression is remarkable, and is not without difficulty. The meaning of it, we are confidently told, is, that his faith was accepted as his justifying righteousness; that, "by mere favour, God valued it as equal to a complete performance of his duties, and rewarded him as if he had been a righteous person."† It would be well if those who use this language, would tell us plainly what they mean by faith; whether it is a simple reliance upon the merit of Christ to the exclusion of works, or such a belief in him as is accompanied with works and derives its efficacy from them. If they speak of faith in the latter sense, as their sentiments on other occasions would lead us to think, their doctrine is refuted by the arguments by which it was formerly proved, that we are not justified by sincere obedience to a new law of grace which God is supposed to have given to us. But if they refer to faith alone, and, at the same time, deny that the righteousness of Christ is imputed, they must maintain that this single act is accepted instead of obedience in general, and on the ground of it a sinner is pronounced to be righteous. Is it possible that any man really believes that faith, thus disjointed from all works, is equivalent, in the Divine estimation, to the whole obedience which we originally owed? Whatever some may believe, it is certain that this faith is the act of the sinner. It is his obedience to a law requiring faith, and is therefore a work as much as any other duty. How, then, are we to understand the words of the Apostle, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."‡ He evidently speaks of faith and works as directly opposed to each other in our justification. According to this opinion, however, they are not opposed, but while all other works are excluded, one work, namely faith, is retained; so that Paul should have said, "To him who omits all works but one, that work is counted for righteousness." But he has said no such thing, and we are certain never intended to say it; for his design was to prove, that all works are excluded, without a single exception, and that we are justified by faith, not as constituting our righteousness, but as receiving the righteousness of Christ. No unprejudiced man who had read his writings, ever doubted that this was his design. When we reflect, that he expressly declares that Christ is made righteousness to us, that we are made righteous by his obedience, and that righteousness is imputed to us without works, we cannot suppose for a moment that the true meaning of the passage before us is, that faith itself is our justifying righteousness. Fair criticism requires, that a singular expression should be explained in consistency with the general sentiments of the book in which it occurs. By this rule, we must understand the words, "faith is imputed for righteousness," in consistency with Paul's uniform doctrine, that a sinner is just before God only in the righteousness of Christ, and must admit that here he uses a metonymy by which the efficient is put for the effect, or the instrument for the end accomplished by it. Abraham's faith was imputed for righteousness; that is, he obtained by it a righteousness, on the ground of which God justifies the ungodly. We are sure that this was the fact; and we are sure, therefore, that this is what the apostle intended to express.

Again, Faith may be considered as the condition of our justification, as it has been sometimes called; but whether with propriety, may be doubted. If, by condition, is meant that which is required to the enjoyment of a blessing, that which must precede it in the order of time or of nature, it may be truly said, that faith is the condition of justification, because nothing more is intended than to express, in different words, the uniform doctrine of Scripture, that we are justified by faith. But the "condition" of any thing usually signifies that which, being done, gives us a right or title to it, because it possesses either intrinsic or conventional merit. To call faith, in this sense, the condition of our justification, would be worse than inaccurate; it would introduce human merit to the dishonour of Divine grace, and overthrow the doctrine so clearly taught in the New Testament. The term, condition, should therefore be avoided, because it is calculated to mislead the ignorant by suggesting ideas contrary to the truth of the gospel.

In the last place, Faith may be considered as the means or instrument of justification. The latter term especially has been frequently employed; and as both are of human origin, they have no other claim to be preferred but what arises from their fitness to express the office of faith. As a certain influence is ascribed to it in the justification of a sinner, and, at the same time, it is not the meritorious cause nor properly the condition, either of the terms conveys the idea of the part which it acts in this important affair. Those who believe in Christ are said to receive him, and faith is the instrument by which he is received. It is the hand with which we take the gift, which God freely bestows. Whatever term we use, the sole office of faith is to put us in possession of the righteousness of our Redeemer, not in the way of merit, but by a simple acceptance of it as presented and offered to us in the gospel.

It was the will of God that we should not be immediately justified on the ground of the obedience and death of his Son in our room, but that some act of our minds should precede the application of his merits to us. In a case of suretyship, the three following things are necessary: first, that the surety be willing to engage; secondly, that the person to whom the debt or service is owing be willing to accept of him instead of the principal; and thirdly, that the person for whom he becomes bound, consent that he should act for him. God was willing to accept of Christ as the substitute of sinners; Christ was willing to come under our obligations; and all that was farther necessary, was, that we should consent to his undertaking them. Our consent, indeed, was not necessary to his entering upon his office, nor was it possible that it could be given, as he assumed it before we existed; but it was necessary to our participation of the benefits of his suretyship. This consent is given by faith, which is our cordial approbation of his substitution and vicarious righteousness. And the reason of requiring faith will be evident, if we reflect, that, without this act of our minds, we could not conceive the effect of his suretyship to be communicated to us; for, how could a righteousness be imputed to us, or accounted ours, which we did not desire, and which we refused to accept?

We may observe how well adapted faith is to promote the great design of God in the justification of sinners, the glory of his grace. Between grace and works, there is an irreconcilable opposition, and the admission of the one involves the exclusion of the other. If we are justified by works, we are not justified freely; and the honour of grace, which gives without money and without price, is impaired. This would have been the effect if any act of ours had been made the condition of our justification, if we had been pardoned on account of our repentance and reformation, and restored to the favour of God on account of our love to him and sincere obedience to his law. But by the appointment of faith, the glory of grace is fully

* Rom. iv. 3.
† Dr. M'Knight, Note 2. *in loco.*
‡ Rom. iv. 5.

displayed. It cannot be supposed, that a poor man has any merit in taking the alms which are presented to him without his solicitation. It is not his acceptance which gives him a right to enjoy them, but the offer made by his charitable neighbour. It cannot be supposed that there is any merit in consenting that Christ should perform for us what we could not perform for ourselves; any merit in relying on his obedience and sufferings, and acknowledging that there is nothing in ourselves which could recommend us to God. This consent to the suretyship of Christ, this dependence on his righteousness, is the essence of justifying faith. The wisdom of God is manifest in this constitution, which takes away from man every ground of boasting, abases his pride, and leads him to give all the praise to the true Author of salvation. Having saved us by his own arm, he makes it bare, if I may speak so, stretches it out openly, to make all men see that by it alone the mighty work was achieved. To the sinner nothing is left but to receive, with profound humility and gratitude, the precious gift which God most freely bestows. There is an express acknowledgment in the exercise of faith, that there is no goodness in himself for which God should be favourable to him; and he says, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."*

It may be added, that faith is not of ourselves, but "is the gift of God."† As if it were not enough to exclude works of every kind, and to appoint faith to be the means of obtaining an interest in Christ, lest we should boast of faith itself, through our strong natural disposition to set an undue value upon every thing which belongs to us, it is declared to be a gift, to the acquisition of which we contribute nothing, in the communication of which to us we are passive, and in exercising which we do not exert our own strength, but act in consequence of being acted upon by supernatural power. The glory of our salvation is thus appropriated to God without any deduction. It is his province to give all, and ours to receive all.

It remains to inquire whether any place should be assigned to repentance in our justification; and the inquiry is the more necessary, because nothing is more common than to speak of it as if it were the condition upon which the enjoyment of this blessing is suspended. It is supposed that Christ died "to give our sorrows weight," or to render our repentance efficacious; language which imports, that through his mediation repentance is accepted as a sort of satisfaction for our sins, or as a reason why they should be pardoned. All our former reasoning tends to show that this opinion is erroneous. If all works are excluded from being the ground of our justification, repentance is not to be exempted. In refuting this opinion some make use of this argument, that repentance cannot be the condition of pardon, because the former does not go before but follows the latter; they think, that till a man believe in Christ and consequently be justified, he cannot truly repent. I shall not enter at present into the controversy respecting the order of these two graces, although it would be easy to show that those, who place justifying faith first, are encountered by difficulties and objections, which are not sufficiently removed by a hypothesis founded on what they conceive to be the necessary arrangement of the Divine operations in the application of redemption. Some men, while they profess the highest veneration for the standards of our Church, do not always conform to their language, but take the liberty in particular instances, to make use of a corrected, and, in their judgment, a more accurate phraseology. Let our standards be altered if they are wrong, but let not those who are most zealous to maintain their integrity, and reject any proposal of change, practise, without avowing it, what they openly denounce as a crime. "Although repentance," says our Confession of Faith, "be not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ, yet is it of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it."* Not only is it asserted in general, that an impenitent sinner cannot be pardoned, but it is expressly stated that before he is pardoned he must cease to be impenitent. Whatever may be the order of faith and repentance, both must exist in the mind of the sinner who is justified; and indeed it is impossible to conceive any man to believe in Christ, without being duly affected with a sense of sin, of its vileness as well as of its guilt. He who is pardoned is a penitent like the publican in the parable, who said, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" he is not pardoned, however, for his repentance, but, as our Confession affirms, by an "act of God's free grace in Christ." God has no respect to his penitence as the cause for which he receives him into favour, but solely to the atonement and obedience of his Surety.

It may be objected, that, although the Scriptures do in many places speak as if we were justified by faith alone, yet there are other passages which appear to favour the doctrine of justification by works. It is said for example, that men shall be finally judged "according to their works;"† and our Lord represents the general judgment as proceeding upon this ground, when to the sentence pronounced upon the righteous he subjoins an enumeration of their deeds of charity as the reason of it: "For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink,"‡ &c. But, besides that one part of Scripture should be explained consistently with another, and particular occasional expressions should be understood according to the general tenor of its doctrine, the apparent difficulty will vanish if we reflect upon the design of the judgment. Had nothing been intended except the distribution of rewards and punishments, this might have been accomplished without the publicity and solemnity of the grand assize; but the purpose of an assembly of the human race, of their arrangement in two divisions, and of the other proceedings of the great day, is to reveal the righteousness of God. It is to convince all, that the Judge of all the earth does right, by an open display of his justice. For this end, it is necessary that the works of the righteous should be brought forward to view, as well as those of the wicked; for something would be wanting to complete the transaction, if the sentence in the case of the latter were proved to be just by a detail of their crimes, but in the case of the former were founded only on their faith. The foundation, indeed, would be valid; but as faith is an act of the mind, although known to God it is unknown to all other beings, unless it be made manifest by its fruits. Now, as the object of the judgment is not merely to exercise justice, but to convince all the spectators of the awful scene that it is exercised, it is necessary that some sensible proof should be produced, which shall leave no doubt in their minds that those on the right hand were entitled to the happiness to which they are adjudged. Their good works will constitute this proof, not as being the ground of their title, but as the evidence that they are possessed of that faith to which eternal life was promised, because it was the appointed means of uniting them to the Saviour. This is the true reason why their works will be referred to in the judgment; and in this way we must account for the fact, if we would not set one part of Scripture at variance with another. Men will be judged according

* Is. xlv. 24. † Eph. ii. 8.

* Conf. ch. xv. § 3. † Rev. xx. 12. ‡ Matth. xxv. 35.

to their works; or a sentence will be passed upon them according to their state and character, of which their works will be the evidence.

There is another passage in which good works may seem to be represented as the foundation of our title to heaven. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, *that*—ἵνα—they may have *right*—ἐξουσια—to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."* Ἐξουσια, which is rendered *right*, is a word which bears a variety of senses, and may be translated *power, authority, liberty, privilege*. It does not necessarily convey the idea of right, in the common acceptation of the term; it may be understood simply to mean, that those who do the commandments shall have access to the tree of life, or shall enjoy the privilege of access to it. The meanings of the conjunction ἵνα, translated *that*, are also numerous. It denotes the final cause, or that for which any thing is done, or merely the event and issue of a thing, or it is used for the simple purpose of explanation: "Blessed are they that do his commandments." How does this appear? "They shall have access to the tree of life." Blessed are they who obey in the hope of eternal life, for eternal life shall be their gracious reward. This shall be the happy result. In the preceding context, our Lord declares, "that he will come quickly, and that his reward is with him, to give every man according as his work shall be."† Then follows the illustration. The righteous shall be admitted into the celestial city and partake of all its delights; but the wicked shall be excluded from it, "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."‡ When the passage is thus explained, there is no difficulty in it. It merely states the happiness of those who obey in the hope of eternal life, the great motive proposed in the gospel to excite and encourage us, for their labour shall not be in vain. It points out the character of the persons for whom future felicity is reserved.

The principal difficulty arises from the Epistle of James, who seems to teach a different doctrine from that of Paul, when he says, "Ye see how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."‖ But that the contradiction is real, we cannot admit, without supposing that one of them was a false teacher; and we must therefore use our endeavours to reconcile them; as we are certain that the Spirit of God, by whom both were inspired, could not deliver contradictory oracles. Some pretend that Paul is an obscure writer, and that on this account we should give the preference to James. We know the cause of the complaints against the style and reasoning of the former. His doctrine is peculiarly offensive to self-righteous men; and they are eager to invalidate the authority of a teacher, who tells many plain and mortifying truths concerning the depravity of human nature, the insufficiency of our works, and the absolute necessity of an entire dependence upon the righteousness of Christ.

In order to show that the difference between the two Apostles is only apparent, and that their writings perfectly harmonize, I request your attention to the following remarks.

First, Paul and James had not the same design in view. From the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Galatians, it appears to have been his design to show, that a sinner is pardoned, and accepted, and entitled to heaven, not on account of his works, but through faith in the blood of Christ and the imputation of his righteousness. And the reason why he insisted so much upon this doctrine, was, that it is a fundamental article of the Christian religion, and was strenuously opposed by certain teachers, who affirmed that men are saved by the righteousness of the law. James had a different object in view. He does not enter upon the consideration of the plan, by which a sinner is justified before God, but sets himself to oppose the improper use which has been made of the doctrine of salvation by grace. It appears that some, misunderstanding what was said concerning faith, had imagined that we are justified by a bare assent to the gospel, or that faith consisted in an orthodox belief. To the carnally minded this was a very acceptable notion, as it followed, that they might hope for eternal life although they continued in sin. Thus they turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. In opposition to a system which was subversive of all religion, the apostle maintains that good works are required from every disciple of Christ; and that nothing was more vain than for men to pretend that they were justified, while their faith was manifestly of such a nature as to leave them in a state of alienation from God. In a word, his design is not to inform a man how he shall obtain the favour of God, but to convince him, that if his faith is barren and dead he is in a state of condemnation, notwithstanding his profession and his hopes.

I remark, in the second place, That Paul and James do not speak of the same faith. Hence, although they ascribe different things to faith, although by the one it is represented as alone the instrument of our justification, and by the other as ineffectual without works, there is no contradiction in their writings, because they do not refer to the same subject. The faith which, according to Paul, is the instrument of our justification, is a fruit of the Spirit, the faith which is elsewhere termed "the faith of God's elect," "precious faith,"* wrought in us by the power which raised Jesus Christ from the grave; a living and active principle which purifies the heart and excites to universal obedience. But to the faith of which James speaks, these characters and exercises cannot be ascribed. The reason, indeed, why he affirms that men cannot be saved by it, is, that these properties do not belong to it. It is a dead faith, a body without the soul, a faith which is exhausted in an empty profession, and which he therefore compares to the inefficient charity which entertains the hungry and naked with compassionate words, but neither feeds nor clothes them. Such being the marked and essential difference between these two kinds of faith, there is no inconsistency in ascribing justification to the one, and denying it to the other. "If one," says an eminent divine, "affirms that fire will burn, and another denies it, there is no contradiction between them, whilst one intends real fire, and the other only that which is painted."

The last remark which I shall make, is still more conclusive, namely, that Paul and James do not speak of the same justification. Paul, as we have seen, discusses the important question, How we are justified before God, how we obtain the pardon of our sins, and acceptance? and he assigns these privileges "to grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."† The inquiry of James relates to the kind of *faith* by which we are justified, and to the way in which it is evinced to be genuine. It does not treat of justification before God, but of justification before men. He asks, How other men shall know that we are justified? and answers, that they will know it by our works. That this is not a gratuitous assumption for the purpose of evading a difficulty, but is the true meaning of justification in the epistle of James, is evident from the instances to which he appeals. The first is Abraham; concerning whom he says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon

* Rev. xxii. 14. † Ib. 12. ‡ Ib. 15. ‖ James ii. 24.

* Tit. i. 1. 2 Pet. i. 2. † Rom. v. 21.

the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God."* It deserves attention, that, while Abraham is said to have been justified by works, the Scripture is represented as fulfilled which affirms, that faith was imputed unto him for righteousness. These things seem to be contradictory; and they would be so if the apostle were speaking of his justification before God, because it would be attributed to two opposite causes, to works and to faith. But, if we consider him as referring to the justification of Abraham before men, the apparent contradiction will be removed, and this will be the meaning of the passage: "When Abraham believed in God, righteousness was imputed to him, and he was justified. This, however, was a secret transaction, known only to God and to his own conscience. But when he offered Isaac upon the altar, it was manifested to others; for this high act of obedience demonstrated that he was possessed of the living faith, to which the promise of salvation is made." To confirm this interpretation of the passage, let it be observed, that this justification of Abraham is said to have taken place at the time when he obeyed the command of God, to offer up in sacrifice his only-begotten son. Yet the Scripture declares that, thirty years before, as we learn from the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, he was justified by faith. But men are not twice justified by faith; and the inference is therefore unavoidable, that this second justification must relate to a different transaction,—his justification before men, the manifestation of the sincerity of his faith, and, consequently, of his acceptance with God; for faith can be shown only by our works. And thus you perceive in what sense his faith was made perfect by works. They did not supply any defect in it, and concur with it to recommend him to the favour of God; but they proved it to be perfect, or to be not a speculative opinion or listless assent, but a full and practical persuasion of the truth. The second instance which he produces, is Rahab: "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?"† In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are informed that she received them by faith.‡ How she came to the knowledge of Jehovah, the sacred historian has not told us; but it is certain that she did believe in him; and, because she believed in him, received the Israelitish spies into her house. She was therefore justified before their arrival. Hence, her justification by works must signify, as in the case of Abraham, the manifestation of her faith. By them she was justified before men, or proved to be a believer; but she was justified before God prior to the performance of them.

When we consider that Paul and James had different designs, and that they speak of different kinds of faith and justification, we perceive that, notwithstanding an apparent discrepancy, the doctrine of the one perfectly harmonizes with that of the other. When James affirms, that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,"‖ he does not contradict Paul, who asserts, that "we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law;"§ he simply lays down this important proposition, that it is not by a simple profession of faith that we can know a man to be in a state of favour with God, but by a profession accompanied by such good works as evince its sincerity. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."¶ No person of common understanding, and common candour, would charge two modern Divines with contradicting each other, if to the question, How are we justified before God? the one should answer, By faith; and to the question, How are we justified before men, or proved to be genuine believers? the other should answer, By works. It requires little sagacity to perceive, and only a little honesty to acknowledge, that, if Paul and James speak of the same subject, it is utterly impossible to reconcile them. The one or the other must be in an error; and, consequently, the one or the other must be erased from the list of the apostles, unless, with Unitarians, we will venture to deny their inspiration, and boldly maintain that they were liable to mistakes like other men. Had Paul and James been understood by the primitive Christians to treat of the same justification, their Epistles would not have been both received as divine. The one or the other would have been rejected. If two writings had appeared, in one of which it was affirmed that there are three persons in the Godhead, and in the other that there is only one person, both could not have been admitted into the canon, but the latter would have been pronounced to be the work of a heretic. Doubts were entertained of the Epistle of James by some individuals, probably because it seemed to be at variance with the doctrines of Paul; but it was received by the Jewish believers to whom it was addressed, as we learn from its insertion in the Syriac version, made, it is supposed, in the first or the beginning of the second century; and it has long been acknowledged by the whole Church as the genuine production of the apostle whose name it bears.

* James ii. 21, 22. † James ii. 25. ‡ Heb. xii. 31.
‖ James ii. 24. § Rom. iii. 28. ¶ James ii. 18.

LECTURE LXXII.

JUSTIFICATION.

Refutation of the Objection, that the Doctrine of Justification by Faith is injurious to Morality.

Against the doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, objections have been advanced, some of which have been already considered. It might have been previously expected, that it would not have been quietly received; and that, mortifying as it is to the pride of man, it would call forth many attempts to set it aside, and to secure to him, if not the whole honour, at least some share in the glory of his salvation. Accordingly, no article of faith has given rise to more violent controversies, and been exhibited in a more odious light; endeavours having been used, not only to disprove it by direct argument, but to load it with consequences from which it may appear that it cannot be true. The consequences, indeed, which are adduced from a doctrine, ought not to be always admitted as a test of its truth, for they may be unfairly drawn, and may be false even when to us they seem to be legitimate, because the subject may be obscure, and we may take only a partial view of it; but if it could be clearly shown that a doctrine leads to vice and impiety, the proof would be complete that it did not emanate from the source of all purity, but that it was an invention of men, or a suggestion of the father of lies.

There is an objection which has been frequently urged against justification by grace, and which Paul, anticipating from his knowledge of the light in which the doctrine would be viewed by men of corrupt minds, has stated and refuted. The doctrine seems to wear an unfriendly aspect to holiness, for which some men profess great zeal, and would persuade us that they are deeply concerned for its interests. In many cases, the sincerity of this profession may be called in question

without a breach of charity; because we find that those who are most eloquent in their declamations in favour of good works, are not distinguished by the practice of them; and that frequently the only proof which they give of attachment to them, consists in violent invectives against those who hold a different creed. At present, however, we shall confine our attention to their reasoning. If we are freely pardoned, they say, and if nothing is required of us that we should enjoy this blessing but to believe, this easy method of obtaining forgiveness will be an incitement to repeat our offences. May we not also be tempted to sin from the notion that, the more numerous our transgressions are, divine grace will be the more glorified in passing them by? If good works are not the condition of our restoration to the favour of God, and he is accepted who does not work, but believes, the most powerful inducement to perform them is taken away. It is the hope of being benefited by his labours, which rouses a person to active exertion. No consideration can be conceived more effectual to excite us to obedience, than the prospect of recommending ourselves to our Maker, and of being rewarded with a blessed immortality; but, if the prize is secured to us by the merit of another, nothing can be expected to follow but total remissness. Men, persuading themselves that they are justified by faith, will naturally conclude that good works are unnecessary, every purpose which they were intended to accomplish being effected by a different expedient. They will think that there is no hazard in neglecting them; and perhaps they will deem it their duty to neglect them, lest they should interfere with the righteousness of Christ, weaken their feelings of dependence upon him, and create in their minds an idea of merit, by which his honour would be impaired.

This is the objection against our doctrine; and it is stated, I apprehend, in all its force. Justification by faith, without the works of the law, is injurious to the interests of morality, by weakening or destroying the motives to it. If the objection were well founded, if there were such an opposition between free justification and the necessity of holiness, as some men pretend, it would follow that our views are erroneous, and that what we call the Gospel of the grace of God is a licentious perversion of the truth. Paul, as we have already remarked, anticipated this objection; and it is not improbable that it was brought forward by some disputers in his days. Hence arises a strong presumption, that his doctrine and ours, in reference to this important article of religion, agree. There would have been no room for the objection, if he had taught that men are in any sense justified by works. Whatever other faults might have been found with his doctrine, it could not have been alleged that it had a tendency to set aside the obligations to duty; and if any person had been so stupid as to urge this objection, Paul would not have entered into an elaborate train of reasoning with a view to show that it was inapplicable, but would have thought it sufficient to state anew, that, according to him, good works were the condition of our restoration to the favour of God. After having declared that, "as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;"* after having given the same view of justification which we have exhibited, he adds, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."*

Decisive, however, as this objection is accounted, and triumphantly as it is displayed as a complete refutation of our doctrine, it is easy to show that it discovers rather the ignorance of those who advance it, than the strength of their cause. Three things are taken for granted, which are grossly and palpably false. It is presumed, that, if good works are not necessary to the justification of a sinner, they are not necessary for any other purpose, and are altogether useless; that justification and sanctification may be separated, or that a man may be received into the favour of God and yet continue unholy; and that the doctrine of justification by grace does not supply motives of sufficient efficacy to insure our obedience. If the reverse of these assumptions can be proved, the objection falls to the ground; and although we be justified by faith, the interests of holiness are effectually secured.

First, It is assumed that, unless good works are the condition of justification, there is no other reason of sufficient efficacy to induce us to perform them. It is not a little strange that this idea should be adopted, especially by persons who have much to tell us concerning eternal and immutable morality, by which they mean, that morality is founded in the nature of things, is independent of time, and place, and circumstances, and is of perpetual obligation, whatever may be the condition of intelligent beings. It does not well accord with their fine declamations concerning the intrinsic beauty of virtue, the satisfaction which it imparts to the mind, and which more than compensates the difficulties and sacrifices attending the practice of it, and the disinterested character of a good man, who will cultivate virtue for its own sake. These speculations have vanished into air, and it is confessed by the authors of them that virtue requires a more substantial recommendation than its own charms; that it is in fact a calculation of interest; and that unless it hold out the prospect of solid advantage, it will have no authority upon our consciences, no attractions for our hearts. Hence we learn what are the real sentiments and feelings of the objectors, for they virtually acknowledge, that notwithstanding their pretended zeal for good works, they would not hold them in estimation were it not for their consequences; that they do not set a value upon them for their intrinsic worth, but solely because they are the means by which their own happiness will be promoted. This is a fair inference from their objection; for they unquestionably judge from themselves, when they say, that, if men are once persuaded that works are not the condition of eternal life, they will consider themselves as loosed from any obligation to perform them. They conclude that other men would act in this manner, because they are conscious that such would be their own conduct.

But although they can perceive no reason for the performance of good works, if they are not the meritorious cause of our justification, those who have studied the Scriptures, and imbibed their spirit, entertain a different opinion.

Obedience to the divine law is our indispensable duty, without any reference to our own interest. Nothing is more contrary to reason and piety than to suppose, that moral obligation is founded on a contract between us and our Maker, by which we engage to

* Rom. v. 18, 19.

* Rom. vi. 1—7.

fulfil certain services in consideration of certain advantages. The idea assumes what is false—that we are independent beings, and voluntarily enter into an engagement to give what we might withhold. If God is the author of our existence and faculties, he has undoubted right to prescribe the purpose for which we should use those faculties, and his will constitutes a permanent obligation. The reason why we should obey is not that we expect a recompense from him, but that being our Creator he is our Sovereign Lord, to whose commands we should implicitly bow. There is no doubt that a creature would be bound to obey, although he knew that next moment he should be annihilated. The truth is, that what we do is not obedience, unless it be done from respect to his will; for to obey is to execute the orders of a superior because they are his orders, and not because they will be productive of some advantage to ourselves. And this is in fact the consideration by which true Christians are influenced. They think principally of their duty, regarding their interest as a subordinate consideration, and conform to the precepts of the law because the authority which enjoins them is sacred in their eyes. Hence it appears, that, although good works should not be the condition of justification, the reason for performing them remains in all its force. By them we discharge the debt of obedience which we owe to the Author of our Being.

Again, obedience is the return which is due to God for his innumerable favours. The objectors seem to think that the expectation of new blessings is a powerful excitement to duty, but that the remembrance of past blessings will have no such effect. It is acknowledged that men are very apt to forget the kindness of a benefactor; but bad as human nature is, instances of gratitude are not uncommon, and many a willing service is performed under the influence of this feeling. In particular, we might calculate upon its powerful operation in those who have received from God the remission of their sins, and a right to eternal life, and whose hearts have been softened and made susceptible of every good impression by the Spirit of grace. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" is a question which a justified man will naturally ask; and knowing that obedience is the most acceptable return, "he will make haste, and not delay to keep his commandments." The objection makes no allowance for the operation of gratitude, and supposes men, even when brought under the power of religion, to be entirely governed by selfishness. But true believers enter into the spirit of the apostolic exhortation, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

In the next place, by obedience we glorify God, and recommend religion to our fellow-men: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."† While we thus pay to God the homage which he claims, and recognise him as a Being of essential purity, which is the glory of his nature, our conduct is calculated to make an impression upon others, and to induce them seriously to consider their obligations, and to endeavour, through Divine assistance, to fulfil them: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."‡ These are reasons which will influence those who reflect, that the end of all the works of God is his glory; and that as it is passively promoted by the inferior parts of the creation, in which his perfections are displayed, so it is the sacred duty of intelligent beings to contribute to it actively, by the dedication of their faculties to his service. In answering the objection, we are perpetually reminded of the narrow contracted views from which it has proceeded. What is not immediately related to themselves, does not fall under the contemplation of the objectors. Why should they glorify God, unless it can be shown that some benefit will accrue to them? They who reason in this manner, furnish the clearest evidence that they do not understand the enlightened and liberal principles of genuine piety, and are actuated by the mercenary spirit of slaves. It is certain that the spirit of a Christian would not have dictated the objection which we are at present refuting.

I remark, in the last place, that the consideration which appears to the objectors to be alone of any force to excite men to obedience, a regard to their own interest, is not wanting, according to the doctrine of justification by faith. Although good works are not the foundation of our title to eternal life, yet they are intimately connected with our happiness, and contribute to promote it. To a believer, holiness is an evidence of the existence of Divine grace in his heart, of the sincerity of his faith, and consequently of his interest in the favour of God. "Hereby perceive we that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."* It is his qualification for communion with God, between whom and a creature polluted with sin there can be no comfortable intercourse. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."† If the joys of fellowship with God will not excite men to their duty, the promise of heaven itself, as their reward, would have as little effect; for heaven, rightly understood, is a continuation of the pleasures of devotion, and cannot be an object of desire unless those pleasures are prized above all earthly delights. And this leads me to state, that when we have abandoned the idea of good works being the condition of future happiness, there remains this strong reason for performing them, that they are indispensably necessary to prepare us for it; for this is the law, from which there is no exemption, that "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."‡ He who trusts in the merit of the Saviour, feels himself impelled to the cultivation of holiness as powerfully as if his title to heaven had depended upon it. What would a right to it avail if he were incapable of enjoying it? and what joy would the presence of God give to a man who was not assimilated to him by the renovation of his soul? Sin, which is the source of our disquietudes and sorrows upon earth, would render us miserable even in the region of blessedness.

If, then, there are so many purposes which holiness serves, and which are, consequently, reasons for practising it, we do not set aside good works by excluding them from our justification. We are not so foolish as to think that they are useful for nothing, because they are not useful for every thing. This, however, is the import and the strength of the objection which is advanced against our doctrine with so much confidence. If we are not justified by works, they may be dismissed as superfluous.

In the second place, it is taken for granted by those who urge the objection, that justification and sanctification may be separated, or that a man, who is received into the favour of God, may continue unholy. If it can be shown that this supposition is false, the objection falls to the ground. In reasoning concerning the Divine dispensations, we ought not to admit arbitrary hypotheses, but should endeavour to ascertain what is the established order of things. Men may conceive, through ignorance, a sinner to be justified without being sanctified, or his state to be changed while there is no change in his character, and on this ground may prove the dangerous consequences of maintaining the doctrine of justification by grace. Here is a man who

* 1 Cor. vi. 20. † John xv. 8. ‡ Matt. v. 16.

* 1 John iii. 19. † Ib. i. 7. ‡ Heb. xii. 14.

is the object of the love of God, but is in an unregenerated state, and possesses a right to a blessed immortality, although he is living in sin. Were this the true state of the case, it might be justly said of our doctrine, that it leads to licentiousness, and must therefore have originated in human ignorance or depravity. But the separation exists only in theory, and affords an instance of the false alarms which men frequently experience from phantoms of their own imagination.

The Scriptures represent the two blessings as closely connected, and as enjoyed at the same time: "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."* When they draw the character of justified persons, the description points, not only to their interest in the Divine favour, but also to the holy exercises in which they are engaged: "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;"† that is, they are not carnal, but spiritual; they are not governed by the desires and volitions of corrupt nature, but by the principles of grace. It was not the intention of the apostle to state the ground on which they are exempt from condemnation, but to inform us of the moral qualities of the persons to whom this privilege belongs. To be under grace, and not under the law, or, in other words, to be delivered from the curse of the law and restored to the favour of God, is represented as a state which secures us from the reigning power of sin: "Sin shall not have the dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."‡ The faith by which we are justified is said to be a living faith, which manifests itself in holiness of life, while the faith which is alone, the faith which is not productive of good works as its native fruit, is pronounced to be useless to its possessor: "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."‖

The inseparable connection between justification and sanctification, is farther manifest from the consideration, that a sinner cannot be justified till he believe; and that as faith is a supernatural grace, it cannot exist without the communication of the Spirit to the soul. But the Spirit, if I may be allowed to use figurative language, does not come alone; he brings all his graces, or as the Scripture calls them, his fruits along with him, infusing not only faith, but also hope and love; and thus he sows the seeds of holiness, which immediately spring up and yield a rich harvest of good works. Those who maintain that the doctrine of justification by faith is unfriendly to holiness, have adopted unscriptural ideas of faith. They suppose it to be a mere assent of the understanding to a proposition supported by evidence, and do not seem to know, that the faith of which we speak, is an act which proceeds from a principle of spiritual life in the heart. The justified person was dead in trespasses and sins, but is now alive; his nature is changed as well as his state; he is delivered from the power as well as from the guilt of sin; and his faith, which embraces the righteousness of Christ, works by love to God and man, as naturally as a tree puts forth buds, and leaves, and blossoms, and fruit. The objection which we are considering betrays deplorable ignorance of the operations of grace; and those who have derived their ideas of faith, its origin and efficacy, from the Scriptures, will hardly consider it as worthy of a serious refutation. What method can be conceived more effectual to secure the performance of good works, than the communication of the Spirit of holiness?

Hence, we perceive how false it is to charge the doctrine of justification by faith, with giving encouragement to the neglect of our duty. According to the immutable law of heaven, he who is justified, is also sanctified; and he cannot be justified, because he cannot believe, till he receive the Holy Ghost, by which he is enabled "to put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."*

In the third place, It is presumed that the doctrine of justification by faith, does not supply any motive of sufficient efficacy to restrain us from sin, and to excite us to obedience. Nothing, however, is more easy than to show that the idea is unfounded.

First, This doctrine furnishes a most powerful motive to restrain us from sin, by exhibiting it in such a light as is calculated to inspire the utmost abhorrence of it. The pardon of sin is granted in justification; but it is granted solely on the ground of the atonement of Christ. We are thus reminded that sin is offensive to God in the highest possible degree, since nothing could induce him to forgive it but the dreadful sacrifice of his only-begotten Son. His wrath could not be appeased but by the shedding of his precious blood. Were God to pardon us upon repentance, it would appear, indeed, that he had been displeased; but we should naturally conclude, that he was not much offended; since, on so slight a ground as our sorrow, and confession, and amendment, he was willing to cancel what is past. It is not a very aggravated fault for which repentance will atone. But now, when death is demanded, and that the death not of a mere man, but of the Lord of Glory, what can we infer but that the Divine detestation of sin is infinite? And can we believe this awful truth, and at the same time persist in the love and practice of sin? It is impossible. Men may sin when the scene of the crucifixion is forgotten; but they will not sin when it is fresh in their remembrance. Upon a regenerated heart its power is irresistible. A believer will not transgress while the terrors of Divine wrath are displayed before his eyes, and a most impressive demonstration is given of the contrariety of sin to the will and nature of God. He is delivered, indeed, from its penal effects; but he is delivered by such means as must inspire him with abhorrence of its vileness and dread of its consequences.

Secondly, This doctrine supplies a strong motive to obedience, by reminding us that the obligation to it is immutable, and can, upon no account, be dispensed with. Justification by faith proceeds upon the ground of the previous fulfilment of the law by Jesus Christ in the character of our Surety. Although to us the gift of eternal life is free, and nothing is required but that we should accept it with humble gratitude, yet, in respect of our Redeemer, it is the reward of the fulfilment of the condition upon which it was originally promised. The plan of justifying a sinner, according to the Gospel, does not set aside the moral law or abate its demands; but, on the contrary, it recognises its authority, and magnifies it by a righteousness commensurate to its requisitions. The dispensation of grace is not intended to throw any reflection upon the dispensation of the law; but, while it provides a remedy for the evil caused by the violation of the law, it gives a full sanction to its claims, and exhibits the original constitution as worthy of its Author, a bright display of his justice and holiness. From the terms prescribed to our Saviour we learn, that God could not dispense with obedience, even in favour of those whom he loved. How then is it supposed that our doctrine is unfavourable to holiness? Does it teach us to disregard the precepts of the law, by carrying its authority to the greatest possible height? Does it present a temptation to withhold obedience, by showing that God loves it as much as he loves the exercise of mercy; and that, full

* 1 Cor. vi. 11. † Rom. viii. 1. ‡ Ib. vi. 14.
‖ James ii. 26.

* Eph. iv. 22, 24.

of compassion as he is, he would not relieve mankind from their misery, unless the rights of his law were respected and established? By reminding us that obedience was required from our Surety as the condition of our restoration to the favour of God, does it authorize us to conclude that, when we are admitted into a justified state, the obligation to it is dissolved, and we may safely trample the precept under foot? These certainly are inferences which cannot be logically deduced from the premises; but in this manner they must reason who affirm, that the doctrine of justification by grace tends to licentiousness.

In the third place, The doctrine of free justification is calculated to awaken gratitude and love to the Author of our Salvation. The value of the blessing is inestimable, and it is bestowed without money and without price. No condition, properly so called, is prescribed; but all that is required is, that we should believe in him, "who suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."* Had some condition been enjoined, our sense of the Divine goodness would have been weaker, as less grace would have appeared in conferring the blessing; and the selfish idea of merit would have shed its paralysing influence upon the emotions of the heart. But now, when grace shines with undiminished lustre, and the sinner knows that he is indebted to it alone for the remission of his manifold offences, and the hope of a blessed immortality, will not all that is within him be stirred up to glorify his Divine Benefactor? God will appear to him worthy of the most ardent love, and of the best return which he can make for his wonderful and unmerited kindness. He will not dream of recompensing him; for, in this respect, our goodness extends not to God; but the principle of his conduct will be a desire to express the gratitude which he feels, and to do what he can for the honour of him who has done all for his salvation. When gratitude is excited, and the feeling is strong, compliance with the will of a benefactor is secured. On this ground we affirm, that the doctrine of justification by grace directly tends to advance the interests of holiness. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" The pardoned sinner will say, 'I owe every thing to him; and I am willing to do any thing for him.' "If a man love me, he will keep my words."† Those who have no love to God, can be impelled to obey him only by love to themselves. But a Christian acts upon a more generous plan. He loves God, because God has loved him; and hence, like his Lord and Master, he delights to do his will, and his law is in his heart. That doctrine which is best fitted to beget and cherish love to God, is best calculated to promote the interests of holiness. There is no doctrine, therefore, so favourable to good works, as that of justification by grace.

Lastly, The doctrine of justification by faith encourages us to obey, by giving us the sure hope of acceptance. Men will not engage in vain labour, knowing it to be vain. If success be doubtful, their spirits will flag, and their exertions will be languid; but hope will give life, and vigour, and perseverance in their efforts. According to the doctrine of justification by works, we obey in great uncertainty; we know not what will be the result; our endeavours may prove abortive, our services may be found defective, and be rejected on trial. But according to the doctrine of justification by faith, we obey in the full confidence of gracious acceptance. Believers already enjoy the favour of God through the Saviour, in whom they trust. They do not work for a prize that may be lost, for their title to it is secure; but from gratitude, because it is secure, and they know that their hopes will be realized in the eternal possession of it. They know that the curse of the law is repealed, and consequently, that the great obstacle to the acceptance of their persons and services is removed. They know that, although their works, being imperfect, would be rejected if performed as the condition of the favour of God and future happiness, they will be pleasing to him as testimonies of filial duty and of love without dissimulation. They know that Jesus Christ intercedes for them in the heavenly sanctuary, and recommends their services to his Father by perfuming them with the incense of his merit. By these considerations their hearts are enlarged, and they go forward with ease and delight in the way of the commandments. "They therefore so run, not as uncertainly; they so fight not as one that beateth the air."* They are "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord."†

It may be thought that an objection so manifestly unfounded, as every person perceives who has carefully and dispassionately studied the subject, is not worthy of a serious refutation. But as it has a plausible sound, is often brought forward, and is calculated to make an impression upon the ignorant and superficial, it is proper that we should be furnished with arguments in reply to it, for the vindication of truth and the removal of prejudice.

The question concerning the tendency of the two opposite systems, might be submitted to the decision of experience. The most imposing speculations turn out to be the dreams of fancy, when they are contradicted by facts. I do not say that all those who maintain justification by works are careless of them; but it is certain, that where this doctrine is taught and believed there is commonly a deplorable want of morality; there is little or no appearance of personal and family religion; and the law of God, although magnified in words, is generally disregarded in practice. I would not say, that all who hold justification by faith abound in good works, for men may profess the doctrine without cordially believing it and feeling its power; but it cannot be denied, that where the doctrine is sincerely embraced there is much serious concern for the salvation of the soul, great diligence in observing the ordinances of grace, and attention to personal and relative duties. The result is exactly the reverse of what some men had calculated, and on some occasions, they have been unable to conceal their surprise and mortification. It is a good remark, that worldly men trust in good works without doing them, and believers do good works without trusting in them. However strange the fact may appear, those who understand the Scriptures are at no loss to account for it. The one system cannot purify the heart, because it is false; the other being true, is the power of God unto salvation.

> "Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Love!
> The grand morality is love of thee."‡

So speaks the poet, and he expresses the feeling of every Christian. That doctrine which eminently displays the love of God to the unworthy, creates a deep sense of our high obligations to the Saviour, and fixes our attention upon him as our hope and our life as well as our great exemplar, is the most powerful engine which ever was contrived for rousing the energies of the soul. You may expect every thing from a willing mind; and there is no reason to fear that they will fail to perform their duty, punctually, cheerfully, and steadily, who can say, "The love of Christ constraineth us."‖

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* 1 Pet. iii. 18. † John xiv. 23.

* 1 Cor. ix. 26. † Ib. xv. 58.
‡ Young's Night Thoughts, N. iv. ‖ 2 Cor. v. 14.

In the days of the apostle James there were men, as we have seen in a former lecture,* who imagined that they should be saved by faith without works, from a gross misapprehension of the doctrine of grace; and there have not been wanting successors to them, who have not only imitated their example by trampling upon the precepts of religion, but have adopted the fallacious principle, that the obligations of holiness are superseded by the plan of justifying sinners which the gospel reveals. The strong inclination of the human heart to sin, eagerly lays hold of every pretext to indulge itself, and proceeds to such a degree of impiety as to claim a sanction even from God himself, and to shelter itself under the patronage of religion, thus setting God at variance with himself, and introducing war between the different parts of his word, as if the good news by Jesus Christ were a repeal of the law promulgated from the beginning as the rule of righteousness to mankind. The abusers of divine grace have been called Antinomians, or opponents of the law, which, according to them has lost its power to bind believers to obedience. The name has been ignorantly or malignantly given to those who abhorred the tenet of which it is expressive; and nothing is more common than to call men Antinomians, because they affirm that we are justified by faith without works, although they openly maintain, and prove by their conduct, that they are sincere in maintaining, that believers are bound to yield obedience to the precepts, and are far more zealous of the law in practice than their adversaries. But it is to be lamented, that there have been, and at this moment are, professed Christians who dare openly to teach, that believers are exempted from the law in every sense. On this point, we are as much opposed to them as Arminians are, and have cause to complain of injustice, when we are confounded under the same denomination. We have satisfactorily shown, that our doctrine leads to no such consequence; and publicly declare, that while we expect to be saved only by grace, this grace teaches "us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."†

LECTURE LXXIII.

ON ADOPTION.

Adoption, a part of Justification—Meaning of the term "Sons of God"—The Practice and Nature of Adoption among Men—Definition and Explanation of the Spiritual Privilege of Adoption—The Benefits flowing from it.

Having illustrated at considerable length, the doctrine of justification, I proceed to consider another privilege of believers in Christ, namely, Adoption. There are two reasons why I shall direct your attention to it: first, because it is expressly mentioned in the Scriptures as one of the blessings of redemption; and secondly, because a place is commonly assigned to it in systems of Theology. At the same time, it appears to me to be virtually the same with justification, and to differ from it merely in the new view which it gives of the relation of believers to God, and in the peculiar form in which it exhibits the blessings to which they are entitled. As it implies a change of state, it must be the same; for this change can take place but once; and whether we say that a sinner passes from a state of guilt and condemnation into a state of favour with God, or that he is translated from the family of Satan into the family of heaven, we express the same fact, and only diversify the terms. He who is justified is adopted, and he who is adopted is justified. But as the Scriptures make use of the term adoption, to denote the change of relation which takes place when we are effectually called, and believers are often exhibited in the character of the children of God, the subject is well worthy of our attention, and has a claim to a separate illustration.

There are different grounds on which men receive the designation of the sons of God. First, they are so called on account of their relation to him as their Maker. "Have we not all one Father? and hath not one God created us?"* It is for this reason that, in the third chapter of Luke, where the genealogy of our Saviour is recorded, the Evangelist having traced it up to the progenitor of the human race, by stating in the usual form that such a man was the son of such another man, concludes by saying of Adam, "which was the son of God."† And for the same reason, angels are called his sons. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"‡ Again, the designation of sons of God is given to men in consequence of the external relation in which they stand to him as his people, and the favour with which he regards them. This is obviously the import of the message which God commanded Moses to deliver to Pharaoh. "Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born."‖ It is intimated in these words, that he had chosen the Israelites to be his peculiar people; that he regarded them with peculiar affection, and purposed to bestow upon them distinguished marks of his favour; and that this was the reason why he commanded the king of Egypt to give them liberty to depart, and why he would himself interpose by miracles to effect their deliverance. In the New Testament they are described as the children of the kingdom; and on the same ground the character of the sons of God may now be given to the members of the visible church, who are externally in covenant with him, and have been symbolically admitted into his family by baptism. There remains another mode in which men are constituted the sons of God, namely, by adoption. The term is applied indeed to the sonship of the Israelites, "to whom," as Paul says, "pertained the adoption,"§ because God took them into a relation to himself, in which they did not naturally stand; but it is used in its proper sense and full import, in reference only to believers in Christ. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."¶ And the same apostle says in another place, "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."**

"To adopt a person," as Kennet says in his Roman Antiquities, "was to take him in the room of a son, and to give him a right to all the privileges which accompanied that title. Now the wisdom of the Roman constitution made this matter a public concern. When

* Lect. lxxi. † Titus ii. 12—14.

* Mal. ii. 10. † Luke iii. 38. ‡ Job xxxviii. 4, 7.
‖ Exod. iv. 22. § Rom. ix. 4. ¶ Gal. iv. 4, 5.
** Eph. i. 4—6.

a man had a mind to adopt another into his family, he was obliged to draw up his reasons, and to offer them to the college of the Pontifices for their approbation. If this was obtained, on the motion of the Pontifices, the consul, or some other prime magistrate, brought in a bill at the Comitia Curiata, to make the adoption valid. The private ceremony consisted in buying the person to be adopted, of his parents, for such a sum of money formally given and taken; and Suetonius tells us, that Augustus purchased his grandsons Caius and Lucius of their father Agrippa." It may be added to this account, that the parties appeared before the prætor, when the intended father said, "Art thou willing to become my son?" and the son answered, "I am willing." The relation was thus formed according to law, and the adopted son entered into the family of his new father, assumed his name, became subject to his authority, and was entitled to the whole of the inheritance, or to a share of it if there were any other sons.

I have referred to this practice as existing among the Romans, and sanctioned by the laws of the state; but it was not peculiar to them. It appears to have prevailed among the Greeks, the Egyptians, and, I believe, some other nations. We have an example of adoption among the Egyptians in the case of the daughter of Pharaoh the king, concerning whom it is related that, having accidentally found the infant Moses exposed on the banks of the Nile, she gave him to his mother to be nursed; and that when the child grew, his mother brought him to her, "and he became her son."* He was thus admitted a member of the royal family, and it is mentioned as a proof of the power of his faith, that he renounced this high honour, and chose to take part with his own nation in their afflictions, because they were the people of God: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;† sacrificed the glory and the advantages which he already possessed, and had the prospect of enjoying, in consequence of his adoption. It is the opinion of some, that the term adoption in the New Testament, is not borrowed from the Greeks and Romans, but is founded on the style of the Old Testament, in which, as we have seen, the Israelites are called the sons of God. But it is more probable that, as the New Testament was intended for the use of the Gentiles as well as the Jews, it was the design of the writers, when they employed a word familiar to the latter, to refer to the thing denoted by it as it was practised among them, and thus to convey to them an intelligible idea of the spiritual relation between God and the objects of his favour.

Adoption, according to the scriptural sense of the term, is an act of God, by which he pronounces sinful men to be his sons, admits them into his family, and gives them a right to the privileges of his children. With a view to illustrate this general definition, I request your attention to the following particulars.

First, As an adopted son originally belonged to a different family from that into which he was admitted, we must inquire from what family the children of God are taken. We might say, then, that they are of the family of Adam, understanding by this expression, not merely that they are his natural offspring, his sons and daughters by lineal descent, but that they were born in his image, and after his likeness, and derive from him the guilt, the pollution, and the curse, which he hath bequeathed to them as a fatal inheritance. We might accommodate to our present purpose the words of God to his ancient people, "Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged."‡ 'Look unto Adam your father, and unto Eve that conceived you in sin, and brought you forth in iniquity.' The Scriptures give another view of the subject; and pronounce all men in their fallen state to be the children not only of Adam, but of him by whose artifice they were reduced to their present condition; "Ye are of your father the devil,"* said our Lord to the Jews. 'Ye boast of your connexion with Abraham, and found upon it the hope of acceptance with God; but your conduct proves you to be the genuine offspring of the enemy of all righteousness;' for he adds, "the works of your father ye do." Lest, however, we should suppose that this character is applicable to them alone on account of their peculiar depravity manifested in the rejection of the Messiah, the Scripture is careful to comprehend all unregenerated men under the same denomination: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."† To the justness of this description in reference to notorious transgressors, few will be disposed to object. In their blasphemy, their profaneness, their malice, their envy, their violence and cruelty, we distinctly perceive the horrid features of the spirit of darkness. But pride, self-confidence, a dislike of the divine character and laws, repugnance to the will of our Maker, and a constant inclination to sin, which are found in every man who has not been born again, are indications not less certain, that we are guided by the counsels and actuated by the temper of the first rebel against the righteous government of God. "He is the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience."‡ All the children of disobedience, therefore, are his sons. Although they may disown their relation, they daily recognise it by their unholy thoughts and actions, and unless divine mercy interpose, will receive the inheritance of wrath, which is their allotted portion.

Secondly, as an adopted son became a member of a new family, so he upon whom this spiritual privilege is conferred, is enrolled among the children of God. Like the prodigal, who had gone into a far country, and, having there wasted his substance in riotous living, was reduced to extreme distress, he returns, or rather by Divine Grace is brought back, to the house of his heavenly Father; and his father, to adopt the language of the parable, falling on his neck and embracing him in the arms of his love, does not place him in the condition of a servant, but restores him to the name and the right of a son. And, how glorious is this family to which we are re-united! First in dignity and honour is Jesus Christ himself, who, in his Divine Person, is the eternal Son of God, and, in his mediatorial character, stands in a particular relation to believers. The Scripture calls him "the first born among many brethren," intimating, that he belongs to the heavenly family, in which he claims precedence, and holds the most distinguished place. He is the Elder Brother; for he and the other children, or those of them who are taken from among men, are partakers of a common nature; and for this cause "he is not ashamed to called them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."‖ Next in order are those glorious beings, who, having retained their purity and fidelity, have continued, without interruption, to enjoy the honour and felicity of their primeval state. Angels are the sons of God, as we formerly remarked, and constitute an illustrious portion of the family, distinguished by the excellence of their nature, the superiority of their endowments, the ardour of their love, and their unwearied activity. To them we are united by adoption; for the inhabitants of heaven, and the saints upon earth, compose one holy society, under the pro-

* Exod. ii. 10. † Heb. xi. 24. ‡ Is. li. 1.

* John viii. 44. † 1 John iii. 8, 10. ‡ Eph. ii. 2.
‖ Heb. ii. 11, 12.

tection and government of him in whom all things are gathered together. Lastly, There are the saints triumphant and militant, who, although separated from one another in place, a part being in a state of manhood while the other part can be considered as only in infancy, are all invested with the same high character, and stand in the same relation to God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the prophets and apostles, the martyrs and confessors, and believers of every age and nation, are associated in one great brotherhood. Taken by sovereign grace from the degraded and ruined family to which we naturally belonged, we are introduced into the fellowship of the most glorious creatures in the universe, the bright spirits who minister before the throne of the Eternal in heaven, and the happy men upon whom his own hand has impressed the image of his perfection. "Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."* How wonderful the change which takes place in adoption, whether we consider it in itself, or in its consequences! "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."†

We have seen that spiritual, like civil adoption, consists in translating a person from the family in which he was born, into that of a stranger.

In the case of civil adoption, the translation was made at the desire, and by the authority, of the person who, having no children of his own, had recourse to this expedient to supply the want. In like manner, the admission of sinners into the family of heaven, is the act of God, by whom we are blessed with all spiritual blessings. It is an act of his grace and authority; of his grace, in choosing persons so unworthy to enjoy this high honour; of his authority, in dissolving their original connexion, and constituting a new relation between them and himself. Birth, external privileges, corporeal and mental accomplishments, and the suffrages of others, cannot elevate us to this dignity. "We are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."‡ The same sentence which acquits us from guilt and restores us to favour, invests us with the privilege of sonship and all the blessings attached to it. "It shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God."‖

The meritorious cause of adoption, is the mediation of Christ, as we learn from the words formerly quoted: "God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."§ By taking our nature, Jesus has raised it from its fallen state, in which it was divested of its glory, and so depraved that its Maker could not hold communion with it. Its dignity is restored in the person of our Saviour; and, through him, it is now worthy to stand in the presence of God, and to be distinguished by the tokens of his love. But this is not all. He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, and procured that the forfeiture of our sonship should be reversed. He has made satisfaction for our sins, and not only appeased the anger of God, but, by his infinitely valuable obedience, obtained for us all the blessings of salvation. "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."* His righteousness, imputed to believers, gives them a title to the precious fruits of his death; and the union with him, which is formed by the Spirit, places them in the same relation to God with himself. "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God."†

The last remark which I shall make, relates to the means by which we obtain the actual possession of the privilege of adoption. We have seen that, in civil adoption, the consent of the person to be adopted was demanded, and publicly expressed. Something similar takes place in spiritual adoption. The privilege is offered to us in the Gospel; but it does not become ours till we accept of it. Although we do not, and cannot merit it, yet our consent is required, and is indispensably necessary. Now, this consent consists in faith, which implies our cordial acceptance of the blessings which Christ purchased for us, and of which God makes a free gift to us in the Gospel. Hence, to believe in Christ, and to receive him, are used in the Scriptures as equivalent terms. 'Art thou willing,' God says, 'that I shall be thy Father?' The believing sinner answers, 'I am willing.' "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."‡ Now, they are no longer aliens and outcasts, but the members of his family, the objects of his affection and care, and heirs of the glory which shall be revealed. "They are called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord hath named."‖

We have traced some points of resemblance between human adoption and our admission into the family of God; but there are some respects in which they differ, and to these I shall now direct your attention.

First, It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the primary cause of adoption among men does not exist in the present case. It was the want of children which gave rise to the practice, and the object in view was to provide, by this expedient, what nature had denied. But this reason cannot for a moment be supposed to have had an influence in procuring our adoption by our heavenly Father; for, besides that he is self-sufficient, and had always a Son, who is his perfect image, and with whom he maintains an intercourse of love, which is the source of ineffable and infinite blessedness; all the creatures in the universe could make no addition to his felicity, and have nothing to present but what they have first received from his bounty. The Divine nature, although single, is not solitary, and possesses in its own fulness the materials of perfect and perpetual bliss.

Secondly, Human adoption was founded on good qualities, real or supposed, in the object; for we cannot conceive any man to have chosen another to be his son, who did not appear to him worthy of this honour. The Scriptures are careful to impress upon our minds the difference with respect to spiritual adoption, by drawing, with the darkest colours, the original character of those upon whom the blessings of salvation are bestowed. It was necessary, as we learn from a passage already quoted, that men should be redeemed from the curse, in order to receive the adoption of sons. They were under sentence of condemnation for their sins; and appearing to the eye of God guilty and polluted, what could they present to attract his regard? Like the prodigal, they were covered with rags and bloated with crimes, when he was pleased, in his infinite goodness, to receive them into his family.

* Heb. xii. 22—24. † 1 John iii. 1. ‡ John i. 13.
‖ Hos. i. 10 § Gal. iv. 5.

* Eph. ii. 13, 19. † John xx. 17. ‡ Ib. i. 12.
‖ Isa. lxii. 2.

It is on this account that the Apostle John breaks out into the language of admiration when meditating upon the subject: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."*

In the third place, adoption among men commonly extended only to a single person, or, at most, to a very limited number, for obvious reasons. But spiritual adoption is a privilege enjoyed by thousands and millions. It was the design of God, in appointing Jesus Christ to be the author of our salvation, to bring many sons to glory. To the question, "Are there few that be saved?"† our Lord declined to return a direct answer, because it was dictated by a spirit of curiosity, which he would not encourage; but when we consult the Scriptures, we find they are not few, but a great multitude which no man can number; how contrary soever this view of the subject may be to the ideas of bigots, who shut the gates of heaven against all but their own little party. If there was a blank made in the celestial society by the fall of the apostate angels, it will be filled up from the human race; the many mansions in our Father's house will be peopled, and the extent of his family will be proportioned to the invaluable price which was paid for its redemption.

Other points of difference might be mentioned; but passing them, I proceed to inquire what blessings believers enjoy in consequence of their adoption.

First, God sustains the relation of a Father to them: "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."‡ It will be thought, perhaps, that this is so obvious, that there was no necessity to mention it, as a father and son are correlative terms, and the one suggests the other. But what I mean to fix your attention upon, is not the title, but its import, and to remind you that, in consequence of this relation, God is to believers all that is implied in the character of a Father. He bears the most tender love to them; he watches over them with unwearied care; he attends to their interests, and they may repose entire confidence upon his wisdom and goodness. He is a Father who knows their wants, who is never mistaken in his judgment of what will be for their good, who is able to do every thing for them, who is always near to succour and protect them, and who will not abandon them even when provoked by their misconduct. The name of Father dispels every fear, and invites respectful familiarity. We feel ourselves emboldened to tell him our sorrows and desires; to apply to him for counsel, to flee to him as our refuge. If his greatness seems to forbid our approach, if his justice and purity are calculated to repress the fervour of our affection and the eagerness of our hopes, the recollection of the condescension and tenderness of a Father re-animates our hearts, and gives us a confidence to draw near to his throne. Who can tell us how great a privilege it is, to have the God of heaven and earth for a Father?

Secondly, The children of God receive the Spirit of adoption. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts."‖ The purposes for which he is given, are various. The primary design is to inspire them with the temper, as they are now invested with the character, of sons. Human adoption had no effect of this kind. It changed the estate of the person adopted, by translating him from one family to another, and making a person, who was formerly a stranger, his father; but it produced no change in his dispositions. Hence it might happen, and we presume that it did sometimes happen, that he who, misled by specious appearances, had adopted him, was disappointed in his expectations, and had reason to repent that he had admitted an unworthy member into his family. But all the members of the spiritual family are distinguished by the resemblance which they bear to their Father. They receive a new nature, as well as a new name. To express this change, they are represented in the Scriptures as begotten again, and born again, to signify that they receive a new spiritual being, and have new views, and feelings, and desires. They are transformed into the image of Christ, and therefore are made like their Father; for Christ is the express image of his person. This change is the work of the Spirit. If the water of baptism is the sign, the efficient cause is the Spirit, whose province it is to beautify the new, as well as the old, creation. But this is not the only office which he is appointed to perform. There is another of the utmost importance, which is indispensably necessary to their comfort, namely, to enable them to ascertain their relation to God, which is not self-evident, and the reality of which they could not establish without his assistance. Hence he is represented in the Scriptures as giving testimony to the fact. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."* In what manner this testimony is given, has been the subject of dispute. It is not, we may venture to say, by a voice, or something equivalent to a voice, announcing to the man this proposition, 'Thou art a son of God;' or by unaccountable impressions on his mind; but in a way consonant to the Scriptures, and to the regular exercise of our faculties. The expression "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits," imports that there is a double testimony, by our own hearts and by him. The one is not given without the other. Now, we may understand how the two witnesses concur, if we conceive the Holy Ghost to give testimony by enabling the saints to embrace the promises with a particular application to themselves, and to exercise distinctly the various Christian graces, so that their existence and genuineness shall be unquestionable. By this process they are assured of their sonship; for the fact is placed beyond doubt, when they perceive in themselves the certain marks of regeneration. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."† The Spirit bears testimony to the sonship of believers, when he brings to light, by his operations upon their souls, the evidences of their adoption; and thus makes their relation to God as manifest as if he assured them of it with an audible voice. Hence they are enabled to call God their Father; not with the presumption of hypocrites, and the indifference of formalists, but with the confidence of faith, and the ardour of filial affection. They call him Father, not only when his providence smiles upon them and even the sinner persuades himself of his love, but in the dark hour of trouble and sorrow; like our Saviour, who still claimed him in the endearing relation, even when he complained that he had forsaken him. In a word, the hope which sustains the heart of the Christian, the joy which arises within him, the secret refreshment which he experiences in devotional exercises, and the enlargement of his soul in prayer; these are the blessed fruits of the presence and agency of the Spirit of adoption.

Thirdly, Their heavenly Father provides for all their wants. To care for his children, to supply them, according to his ability, with such things as they need, to feed, and clothe, and educate them; these are duties which religion and natural affection prescribe to every parent. He who adopted a son, came under an engagement to act in every respect the part of a father.

* 1 John iii. 1. † Luke xiii. 23. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 18. ‖ Gal. iv. 6.

* Rom. viii. 16. † 1 John iii. 14, 19.

Certainly, then, they who have been admitted into the family of God, may expect all blessings from his goodness, whether pertaining to this world or to the next. A controversy has been agitated, (and what point, great or little, trifling or important, has not been the subject of dispute?) Whether Christ purchased temporal benefits for believers? Those who adopt the negative side of the question, will allow that the blessing which accompanies them is owing to his mediation, and only contend, that the things themselves are not the fruits of his death. It is not easy to conceive what valuable purpose can be served by this discussion, except that it affords an opportunity of displaying nice discrimination in separating two things which common apprehension had blended together. It was not necessary to put us on our guard against ascribing too much to our Saviour, and to count and reckon with him, that we might ascertain the precise extent of our obligations; our grateful feelings towards him have not so strong a tendency to excess, as to stand in need of a check. When we consider that the faithfulness of God is expressly pledged for the temporal provision of his children; that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come; that our heavenly Father is represented as knowing that we have need of food and raiment, and therefore as bestowing them; and that our Saviour has taught his disciples to pray for their daily bread, and, consequently, to ask it in his name and for his sake, we seem to be authorized to rank common benefits among the blessings of the new covenant, and, consequently, to say, that we are indebted for them to the same price which was paid for the salvation of our souls.

As nothing on this obscure controversy has ever come under my notice, I know not exactly the grounds on which the purchase of temporal blessings is denied, but presume that it is because they are bestowed upon unbelievers as well as upon believers. This, however, is an argument of no force. The point at issue is, not whether there is any difference between those two classes in the receipt of these blessings, for it is acknowledged that there is none; but whether there is any difference in respect of right. It is certain that wicked men have no more a right to temporal good things, than a condemned criminal has to the food by which he is sustained till the day of execution. Undoubtedly, he has no claim to it, as he is dead in law, and it is accorded to him solely for the purpose of prolonging his life, till the proper time arrive for subjecting him to the appointed punishment. But believers have a right to the benefits which they enjoy; "for all things," says an apostle, "are yours, whether things present, or things to come." They have a right to them, from the promise that their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure. And how did they obtain this promise? For whose sake was it made to them? "In Christ are all the promises yea and amen, to the glory of God." It is through him that a distinction is made between them and other men, that they can look up to God for their daily bread, while others have no ground for any such expectation. In a word, their right to this world, or to an adequate portion of it, which is enumerated among the things which belong to them—"for the world is yours," says Paul—their right to this world is placed upon its proper basis by the apostle, when he says, "All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's;"* thus referring temporal, as well as spiritual benefits to his mediation, as the cause for which they are communicated to the saints.

If any person should still think that Christ has procured for us, not the benefits themselves, but the blessing which attends them, he is at full liberty to indulge his opinion; but it may be questioned, whether it will contribute in any degree to his piety. "They that fear the Lord shall not lack any good thing." Riches may be denied to them, or may be taken from them, but food convenient may be confidently expected. The blessing of heaven is in their portion, however scanty it may be; and "a little which a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked." "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."* With respect to the provision which he makes for the souls of his children, we are all agreed. As he gave manna to the Israelites in the wilderness, so he gives them his Word, to be the mean of communicating spiritual good things; and it is sometimes compared to milk, and sometimes to strong meat, to intimate that it is adapted to the diversified circumstances and states of the members of his family, to the babe in Christ, and to the full-grown man. His care of them is represented in a solemn and impressive manner in the Sacred Supper, when they are assembled at his table to eat bread and drink wine, as the symbols of heavenly blessings, and all are reminded that he nourishes their souls by his invisible grace. The design of all his institutions is, that they may come, "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."†

In the fourth place, The children of God are subjected to paternal discipline. When we judge according to our feelings, this may seem to be a punishment rather than a privilege, for "no chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous." But as in a human family, he that spares the rod hates his son, because, through mistaken tenderness, he suffers him to escape with impunity when he has committed a fault, and thus permits his wayward inclinations to gather strength, and vicious habits to be formed which will entail misery upon him here and hereafter; so, in the family of God, the want of discipline would be an evidence, not of love, but of neglect and indifference to the interests of the members. The Scripture therefore says, "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."‡ He chastises him because he loves him; and, however paradoxical this may appear upon a superficial view, its truth will be manifest to those who consider the end proposed and the effect produced. God chastises his children, that they may be partakers of his holiness; and holiness is not only the dress and ornament of the members of his family, but it is indispensably necessary to their peace and happiness, both in this world and in the next. Man may think, and even the saints themselves may suspect, when their trials are manifold and severe, that their heavenly Father has disowned and forsaken them. But this is not the only instance in which human reason egregiously errs. What seems to our hasty and limited observation to betoken ill, is the surest proof of his favour; and a state of uninterrupted ease and enjoyment, which we would prefer, would furnish a more solid ground of apprehension. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."‖

Lastly, God will bestow upon his children an eternal inheritance. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."§ Children, by the law of nature and nations, inherit the property of their father; and an adopted son possessed all the rights and privileges of a son by descent. At the death of

* 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23.

* Ps. xxxvii. 16. 3. † Eph. iv. 13. ‡ Heb. xii. 6.
‖ Heb. xii. 7, 8. § Rom. viii. 17.

the person who adopted him, he was legally entitled to his property. There is an inheritance which belongs to the family of God, and every man who is received into it is an heir. The expression, "joint heirs with Christ," imports that the inheritance originally pertains to our Redeemer, who obtained it for himself and those whom he calls his brethren by his meritorious obedience, and that their right to it is founded on their connexion with him. It is an inheritance of glory and felicity, "incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" for them. Whatever God now is to angels and glorified saints, and whatever he will be to them through an endless duration, in which their faculties will be continually expanding, and they will be filled with bliss to the utmost extent of their capacity;—for all this, "which eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the mind of man to conceive," the adopted sons of God are authorized to hope. Even in this world, how happy does the earnest of the inheritance make them! How divine the peace which sheds its influence upon their souls! How pure and elevating the joy which, in some select hours, springs up in their bosoms! How are they raised above the pains and the pleasures of life, while, in the contemplations of faith, they anticipate their future abode in the higher regions of the universe! But these are only an earnest. Their hearts beat high with the expectation of something too sublime to be uttered or adequately conceived; and, while their breasts heave with the vehemence of desire, they breathe out, in broken and impassioned accents, their longings for the time when they shall be delivered from the infirmities of the flesh and the imperfections of the present state, which prevent the full enjoyment of infinite good. "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now: and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."*

LECTURE LXXIV.

ON SANCTIFICATION.

Scriptural meaning of the term, Sanctification—Difference between Justification and Sanctification—Sanctification viewed as a Privilege, and as a Duty—Implies the Mortification of Sin, and the Increase of Positive Holiness—Extent of Holiness attainable in this Life.

The blessing which in the next place claims our attention, is Sanctification. But before I proceed to explain its nature, it is necessary to ascertain the Scriptural meaning of the term.

The word, to sanctify, bears a variety of senses which are considerably different. It sometimes signifies to separate a person or thing from its common use to some particular purpose, even when there is no reference to religion. Thus, in the seventh verse of the twenty-second chapter of Jeremiah, God says, in our translation, "I will prepare," but according to the original, "I will sanctify destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons; and they shall cut down the choice cedars, and cast them into the fire." Again, to sanctify, often signifies to separate from a common to a sacred use, or to dedicate to the service of God. In this sense, the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry were holy; the priests and Levites were holy; the temple erected on Mount Zion was holy; and Jerusalem was called the holy city. Considered in themselves, these persons and things had no more sanctity than other persons and things; their holiness was merely relative, and arose from their consecration to religious uses. God sanctified our Saviour when he set him apart to the mediatorial office, and sent him into the world to execute it; and Christ sanctified himself when he assumed that office, and devoted himself to the performance of its duties. It is worthy of observation, with respect to the words καθαιρειν and ἁγιαζειν, which signify *to cleanse* and *to purify*, that, when used to express the effect of the sacrifice of Christ upon his people, they do not denote internal purification, but dedication to God: "Jesus, that he might sanctify—ινα ἁγιασῃ—the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."* Now, the effect of blood shed as an atonement for sin is, not to cleanse us from pollution, but to free us from guilt, and to restore us to the favour of God: "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean,—ἁγιαζει—sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?"† The effect of the legal sacrifices is compared to that of the death of Christ. The effect of the legal sacrifices was to absolve the offerer from the guilt of his sins, so far that he escaped the temporal penalty which he had incurred, and was admitted into the sanctuary. This is called "sanctifying to the purifying of the flesh." The effect of the death of Christ is to purify the conscience, to obtain for us full pardon, and thus to give us boldness to enter into the holiest of all. There are several other senses of the word, to sanctify. We sanctify the Sabbath when we regard it as more sacred than other days, and perform its appropriate duties. We sanctify the Lord our God, when we treat him with that reverence which is due to him on account of the transcendent excellence of his nature, by which he is distinguished or separated from all other beings. And God sanctifies himself when he manifests his glory. This discussion will not appear unnecessary to any of you who wish to acquire an accurate knowledge of the language of Scripture; and I conclude with remarking, that the idea of separation is implied in all these uses of the term.

I proceed to the last sense of the word, in which it is to be at present understood. When we say, that those who are justified by faith, are also sanctified, our meaning is, that they are made holy, not merely by consecration to the service of God, but by the infusion of his grace, which purifies them from the pollution of sin, and renews them in the whole man after his image. It is plain, from the following passage itself, as well as from the connection in which it is introduced, that, in this sense, the word to sanctify is used. It is a prayer of the apostle, subjoined to an exhortation to abstain from all appearance of evil: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."‡ When the same apostle says, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication,"‖ he evidently refers to purity of heart and conduct. It is unnecessary to multiply quotations, as it is acknowledged by all, that there is an internal holiness by which true Christians are characterized, and that the regularity of the life does not alone answer the demands of religion: "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."§

* Rom. viii. 22, 25.

* Heb. xiii. 12. † Heb. ix. 13, 14. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 23.
‖ 1 Thess. iv. 3. § 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

As justification and sanctification are blessings inseparably connected, it will assist us in forming correct ideas of both, to mark carefully the points in which they differ. They differ in their order; justification precedes, and sanctification follows; a sinner is pardoned and restored to the favour of God, before the Spirit is given to renew him more and more after his image. They differ in their object: justification takes away the guilt of sin, or the obligation to punishment; sanctification cleanses us from its stain or pollution. They differ in their form: justification is a judicial act, by which the sinner is pronounced righteous; sanctification is a physical or moral act, or rather a series of such acts, by which a change is effected in the qualities of the soul. The one, therefore, is called an act, to signify that it is perfected at once; the other is called a work, to signify that it is progressive. Justification being an act passed in a moment, is equal in all believers; sanctification exists in different degrees of advancement in different individuals. In a word, the one changes our state, translating us from a state of condemnation into a state of acceptance; the other changes our nature, or makes those holy who were unholy. I shall add only one difference more, which relates to their matter. In justification, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us; in sanctification, an inherent righteousness is communicated; and upon the whole it appears, that in justification we receive a title to heaven, and by sanctification we are prepared for it, or "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."*

It is worthy of notice, that, in the well known enumeration of the privileges of Christians, when Paul represents the series as a chain stretching from eternity, sanctification is not specified as one of the links. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."† We account for the omission by supposing, either that the apostle intended only to state the process according to which a right to eternal life, and the consequent enjoyment of it, are obtained, (and the right depends solely upon justification, which ensues upon the faith wrought in the heart when the sinner is effectually called;) or that sanctification is virtually included in the privileges which are explicitly stated. It is implied in effectual calling, in which the soul undergoes a spiritual change, or is regenerated, and the foundation is laid of its future progress in holiness; or it is implied in glorification, which will consist in the perfect state of the soul as well as of the body, and may be said to be begun in the present life, because so far as the soul is conformed to the image of God it is already glorified, and hence believers are said to be "changed," even in this world, "into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."‡

The difference between sanctification and regeneration is not a difference in nature and kind, like the difference between it and justification. They are, if I may speak so, parts of one whole. In regeneration there is an infusion of spiritual life into the soul, in which life all the graces or all the holy tempers of the Christian are virtually included. In sanctification those graces are unfolded and matured, and exert their native influence upon the conduct. In regeneration the living seed is sown, and begins to germinate and show itself above ground: in sanctification it grows up, and yields fruit, according to the parable in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundred fold. In regeneration the new creature is formed, but although no member or feature is wanting, they are diminutive and feeble, and it is yet but a babe: in sanctification the body grows in all its parts, acquires vigour and activity, and advances towards the full stature of a perfect man in Christ. In short, it is the same work which is carried on in regeneration and sanctification, according to the words of an apostle, "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."*

Sanctification may be considered as a privilege, and as a duty. In the one view it is the work of God, and in the other it is the work of man, assisted by supernatural grace. As a privilege it is the subject of promise and of prayer. It is promised in the following words, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."† It was the subject of our Lord's intercessory prayer for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth;"‡ and it should be the subject of the prayers of Christians for themselves. "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law."‖ We may afterwards have an opportunity to speak of sanctification as a privilege, when we come to consider its advantages; and I shall only observe, that as it is indispensably necessary to our admission into the immediate presence of God, so it is the source of great happiness upon earth. The foundation of a Christian's peace is the atonement and intercession of the Saviour, in whom God is reconciled; but there is a peace which flows from holiness, and is the natural effect of the cessation of the tumultuary motions of sin, and of the influence of the mild virtues which religion inspires. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them."§ I may add, that it is the high privilege of a creature to be conformed to the image of his Maker. As He is the first and most excellent of all beings, they stand highest in the scale who bear the nearest resemblance to him. If holiness is the glory of God, it is also the glory of man.

Sanctification, considered as a duty, is our work. In this light it is represented in the Scriptures, when we are called to "be holy," to "make" to ourselves "a new heart," and to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."¶ But as I remarked before, in this work man is assisted by grace; for we can do nothing of ourselves, and it is God "who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is called the work of man, not as if he could change his heart, or when the change is effected could carry it forward to perfection, but as he diligently uses the means, trusting in the divine blessing which renders them effectual.

Although in regeneration holy principles are infused into the soul, yet the change produced is only partial. No Christian grace is wanting in the regenerated man, and no sin or sinful inclination retains sovereign power; but the graces are imperfect, and remaining depravity continues to operate, and sometimes prevails. The truth of this statement is manifest from the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, in which we find that in Paul, who is a specimen of other believers, there were two principles, the one of sin and the other of holiness, between which there was a perpetual conflict; and the victory was sometimes on the one side, and sometimes on the other. Two things, therefore, are implied in sanctification, the mortification of sin, and the increase of positive holiness. These are not so distinct that they can go on at different times, for the one necessarily accompanies the other; but in explain-

* Col. i. 12. † Rom. viii. 30. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

* Phil. i. 6. † Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. ‡ John xvii. 17.
‖ Ps. cxix. 34, &c. § Ib. cxix. 165.
¶ 1 Pet. i. 15. Ezek. xviii. 31. 2 Cor. vii. 1.

ing the nature of sanctification, they require to be separately illustrated.

The mortification of sin does not consist solely in abstinence from outward transgressions in which we had previously indulged, but have abandoned by an effort upon ourselves. Of such an effort, any man is capable by his natural powers, and without the influence of any moral consideration, when he is excited solely by a regard to reputation, to health, and to his secular interests. External purity, as our Lord has shown by the example of the Pharisees, may exist, while the heart is foul with the deepest stains of pollution. Nor should it be supposed, that the mortification of sin has taken place, because some sinful inclination which formerly predominated is weakened, or perhaps has disappeared, if other inclinations survive, or if in the room of that which has ceased a new disposition has sprung up, different in form but in its general nature equally criminal. A man who was once a profligate is become sober; but then he is now slavishly devoted to the world, and his heart, which was debased by sensuality, is narrowed and hardened by avarice; or it may be that, although no new vice should show itself in his character, he is puffed up with pride, and glories in his virtues. In these and similar cases, sin retains its original strength, but works in a more concealed manner, or accomplishes its purpose in a different way. The mortification of the body has been often mistaken for the mortification of sin. Men who have withdrawn from society and retired into deserts, and there submitted to the most painful privations, and performed with determined perseverance a tedious round of religious duties, have imagined that they had attained a degree of sanctity, to which no man could pretend, who was living amidst the commerce of the world. They did not consider, that in their solitudes, where they were not exposed to external temptations, sinful propensities, which were supposed to be eradicated, might have only lain dormant for want of excitement, and might have revived if they had been brought back to society, like the weeds which disappear in winter but show themselves again at the return of spring. I would by no means affirm, that such men were all hypocrites, or that they were all deceived, for from the little that I know of their history and their writings, I believe that some of them were truly pious; but I have no doubt that many of them, if they had told the truth, would have confessed that they often cast a longing look towards the world which they had forsaken, like Jerome, who honestly acknowledged, that during his seclusion in Palestine, his thoughts frequently wandered after the pleasures of Rome.

The mortification of sin is founded in hatred of it, and not simply in fear of its consequences. It is connected with the love of God, who holds sin in abhorrence, and whose will it is that we should purify ourselves from it. It aims at subduing and extirpating not only those sins which are particularly odious, on account of their grossness and their contrariety to the general sentiments and feelings of mankind, but every known sin, however venial the world may esteem it; and if there is any sin about a believer of which he is not aware, it also is included, in this sense, that he will be content with nothing less than universal purification, and is earnestly desirous that not a single stain should be left. It is carried on not in his own strength, but by the means which God has appointed, and the assistance which he graciously affords; by faith, and prayer, and watchfulness, and determined resistance. It is not the work of a day, but of life. Sin is like a man who has received a wound which has enfeebled him, but has not entirely deprived him of strength. He is not dead but dying; he is still capable of action, and even of vigorous efforts; and his antagonist must therefore be upon his guard, and watch for an opportunity to inflict new wounds which will terminate the struggle. "Mortify your members which are upon the earth."* In consequence of the interest which the believer has obtained in the death of Christ, the power of sin is broken, and it will be reduced more and more, by the grace which God is ready to communicate, if he humbly ask and diligently improve it. In this way only can he hope for success; and, accordingly, Paul concludes the account of his internal conflict with thanksgiving to God, who had enabled him to resist and in some degree to overcome. "I thank God," he says, "through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, and with the flesh the law of sin;"† intimating that, although depravity still lurked in him and made efforts to regain the mastery, yet it existed only in the lower part of his nature, and the superior principles, the understanding, the conscience, and the will, were elevated to the service of God.

The mortification of sin does not imply its utter extirpation, but the reduction of its influence within narrower limits; for however earnestly a Christian may wish that it should cease to exist in his soul, complete exemption from it, as we shall afterwards see, is unattainable in the present state. It is mortified when his views of its vileness are clearer and more affecting, and, consequently, his hatred of it is more intense; when he becomes more quick in detecting it under its most specious forms, as well as more active in searching it out; when he is excited to more frequent and fervent prayer for deliverance from it; when, from increased aversion, he is more vigilant in observing its motions, and using precautions against its attacks; when its efforts become less frequent and more faint, like those of a man who is languishing under his wounds; when he is more deeply humbled for the remains of it which he still perceives; and when for having consented to it on any occasion, he feels more profound grief, and is more speedily recovered by repentance. When David was guilty of a great transgression in the affair of Bathsheba, he gave a melancholy proof that the power of depravity was strong within him; but we cannot doubt that this event ultimately contributed to weaken its interests, when we reflect upon his bitter repentance, his humiliating confessions, and his earnest supplications.

Thus, by the grace of God, the Christian dies to sin, and sin dies in him; or, in other words, he hates it more, and its influence over him is diminished. 'He lays aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset him.' The natural consequence is, that his conduct is purer, is more free from acts of sin, as the fruit falls off from a tree when the root is destroyed or injured.

Let us proceed to the second division of the subject, namely, the increase of positive holiness. This our Church expresses "by living unto righteousness," and the Scripture, by "having our fruit unto holiness." In proportion as the power of sin is circumscribed, there is more ample space for the Christian graces to grow and flourish. The vigour of the new man will advance, as that of the old man declines. Let us consider the progress of sanctification, in relation to the different powers of the soul.

First, The understanding is more and more illuminated by the word and Spirit of truth. The first illumination takes place in regeneration, when the blind eyes of the sinner are opened, and he who, while he was a natural man, could not receive the things of the Spirit of God, having become a spiritual man, is enabled to discern them. But there is much room for improvement; and hence, we find an apostle praying

* Col. iii. 5. † Rom. vii. 25.

in behalf even of those who were savingly acquainted with the Gospel, that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give to them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened."* Their apprehensions of divine things become more distinct, and steady, and comprehensive, and affecting. Their views are enlarged of God, of Christ, of themselves, of their duty, of sin, of the world, of future and invisible things. As knowledge was communicated to the mind of man in his creation, the restoration of it is necessary that he may be renewed after the image of his Maker. I do not mean speculative knowledge, of which depraved men and infernal spirits are possessed; but knowledge accompanied with suitable affections towards the things unknown. As natural light not only renders objects visible, but beautifies the face of nature with a variety of colours, so the knowledge communicated to the people of God does not merely expand and improve the intellect, but gives a new moral aspect to the whole soul. And the necessity of supernatural illumination will be manifest, if we reflect that the understanding is the leading faculty, which not only, if I may speak so, points out the path to be pursued by the other powers of the soul, but excites them by the attractive and interesting views which it presents. Complete ignorance would be followed by a death-like torpor of the soul, and man would remain in a state of inaction, except so far as he was stimulated by his bodily appetites. Knowledge awakens his dormant faculties. It exhibits objects of love and fear, of hope and aversion, and gives rise to active exertions, with a view to obtain what is good, and to avoid what is evil. As God begins, so he carries on to perfection, the work of the new creation, by the communication of light. "The new man is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him who created him."†

Secondly, In sanctification the will of the believer is rendered more and more conformable to the will of God. In this the essence of holiness consists. As Cicero says, that to have the same desires and aversions, is the consummation of friendship; so we may say, that to be like minded with God, to be entirely resigned to him, to choose what he chooses, and to refuse what he refuses, is the highest moral perfection of a creature. Absolute conformity to the will of God is not attainable in this world, and exists only in heaven, where his will is so done by its blessed inhabitants, that they are proposed as a pattern to us. But it is the effect of regenerating grace to subdue our rebellious hearts, and to bring them under subjection to the authority of our Maker. This is their predominant state; but it is often disturbed by the wayward movements of the will; and it is the design of the Holy Spirit, in his operations upon it, to correct and restrain its aberrations, and to reduce it to a state of habitual submission. The object proposed is, to establish a complete moral dependence upon God; and, with this view, to make the subjects of his influence cease more and more from their own views, and desires, and pursuits. Without pretending to explain what power the Holy Ghost secretly exerts upon the soul, we may say that the effect is produced by means of the light that he gives to the mind; in which, the will of God appears not only supreme and sacred, but so just, and wise, and good, that nothing is more consonant to the dictates of reason, as well as to the commands of religion, than that we should acquiesce in it without reserve and without a murmur. Thus are the people of God led to submission, not only when his will is enforced and recommended by the nature of the duty which it enjoins; but when, naked and unsupported, it demands our obedience, solely because it is his will. In this abstract form it was exhibited to Adam, when the injunction was given to him, to abstain from the fruit of a particular tree in the garden, there being no reason for abstinence but the simple prohibition. It appears equally absolute still in many of the dispensations of Providence, of which no other account can be given, than that such is the decree of heaven; and it is a proof of no inconsiderable progress in holiness, when the person who is tried in this manner, bows to his sovereign Lord, and says, 'God is his will.' Job is an example, whose submission amidst the greatest afflictions, was expressed in these remarkable words: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."* When a Christian finds that he is less disposed to consult with flesh and blood, and more to consult the Scriptures; that he is sincerely desirous to know what is his duty, and more diligent than before to ascertain it; that every intimation of the Divine pleasure commands his attention, and inspires him with holy reverence; that he is more ready, and cheerful, and determined in obedience; and that his supreme desire is to glorify God and to be accepted of him: when this is the prevailing state of his mind, it is evident that God has made him willing in a day of power, and that the work of sanctification is advancing in his soul towards perfection.

Thirdly, In sanctification, all the holy principles or habits, as they are sometimes called, of believers are strengthened. If the affections are considered as modifications of the will, they are purified in proportion to its conformity to the standard of rectitude. The love and hatred, the fear and hope of the believer, will be excited by proper objects, and be regulated with respect to their degree. While the soul is thus affected by proper objects, the lower appetites will be restrained and subjugated, and, although not eradicated, as they are essential principles of our nature, will be directed and retained within due bounds by the light of the understanding and the authority of conscience. The change effected by sanctifying grace may be ascertained by the different feelings with which external things are now regarded. Once, they alone were deemed to be important, but now they are considered as insignificant, or, at least, as subordinate; once, they stirred up strong and impetuous desire, but now they awaken comparatively faint emotions; once, under their influence, the soul was degraded and brutified, as if it had lost its nature and were merely the principle of animal life and feeling; but now they are counteracted by the spirituality of the mind, which, surrounded with earthly things, soars aloft and holds high intercourse with heaven: "By the cross of Christ," says Paul, "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."† In proportion to the increasing vigour of holy habits, the moral connexion of the soul with this world will be dissolved, and the impression diminished which the latter was accustomed to make. The illumination of the mind has a powerful effect upon our active powers. Faith is strengthened by clear apprehensions of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Love grows warmer, as the love of God is more steadily contemplated and more sensibly felt. Hope brightens at the glorious prospect of life and immortality which the gospel displays. Repentance melts into more copious tears, while it looks at the cross, where the vileness of sin is exhibited with an evidence which the heart feels, but words cannot express. All the graces grow under the influence of the truth, which first gave them birth, and now rears them up to manhood. When the Christian "is adding to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to pa-

* Eph. i. 17, 18. † Col. iii. 10.

* Job i. 21. † Gal. vi. 14.

tience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity," he is "neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."* The work of sanctification is not only begun, but is going on to perfection. If we inquire how far the work of sanctification extends, we answer, in the language of our church, that it extends to "the whole man."† The apostle Paul says that God sanctifies his people "wholly in soul, body, and spirit."‡ Man is a compound being, and, according to the opinion of the moderns, learned and unlearned, consists of two parts, a body and a soul. But a different system was held by the ancients, who called man—τριμερης ὑποστασις—a *three-fold person* or *substance*; affirming that, besides the body, there were two internal principles, the soul and the spirit, or, as it was sometimes called, the mind. The soul—ἡ ψυχη—they defined to be the principle of life, or that which distinguishes animate from inanimate things, and they considered it as in itself irrational, as the seat of the appetites and passions, as affected by the body, and as the medium by which the body affects the spirit. The spirit, το πνευμα, or ὁ νους, the mind, was rational, and acted with reason; and it was its office to contend with the body, and to regulate the movements of the inferior principle. It would be foreign to our purpose to inquire whether this, or the modern theory of human nature, is true. The question is not decided by the words of the apostle; for, as it was not his business to teach philosophy but theology, he might adopt, without intending to give his sanction to a particular system, language familiar to those whom he addressed, and, at the same time, well fitted to convey the information which he meant to communicate. He explains his meaning by the word ὁλοτελεις, which is translated "wholly," and subjoins the words soul, body, and spirit, to signify, in the style of the age, that the work of sanctification is universal, or that every part of human nature is the subject of it; the soul in all its faculties, understanding, will, and affections or passions, and also the body. Strictly, indeed, the body is not the subject of sanctification, because, being a material substance, it is susceptible neither of virtue nor of vice; but it is sanctified in this sense, that it is dedicated to the service of God; and its organs and members, which were formerly employed in sinful actions, and were excitements to them, are converted into the instruments of righteousness. It is called in Scripture, "the temple of the Holy Ghost."‖

But while sanctification extends to our whole nature, and leaves no part of it unrenewed, we must not imagine the work to be so complete, as to restore us to a state of perfect purity. There have been men, and there still are, who maintain that sinless perfection is attainable in the present life. This was the doctrine of the founder of the Methodists, and I presume it is still held by his followers. It is acknowledged that the Scriptures call upon us to aim at perfection, and speak of some individuals in such a manner as may lead superficial readers to conclude that they had fully succeeded. They call upon us to "behold the perfect man," and give this as the character of certain individuals. But, one part of Scripture should be explained in consistency with another; and it is contrary to the laws of legitimate interpretation, to wrest a particular expression to a sense at variance with the known and avowed sentiments of the author. If we take this rule along with us, we shall immediately perceive that, in the cases before us, perfection can mean nothing more than integrity or sincerity. He is perfect who unfeignedly loves God, and has a respect to all his commands.

That the most eminent saints mentioned in Scripture, even some of those to whom the epithet, perfect, is applied, were not free from sin, is evident from the defects and blemishes which are discovered in their conduct. The praise of high attainments will undoubtedly be conceded to the apostle of the Gentiles, and it is not easy to conceive upon what principle any man could persuade himself that he or others have excelled him; but, as he expressly disclaims any pretension to perfection, so the relation which he has given of his experience, demonstrates that he uses, on this occasion, the language not only of humility but of truth. "I see," he says, "a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."* Not to confine our attention to a particular case, let us recollect the words of the wise man, "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."† And observe in what strong terms an apostle rejects the doctrine of sinless perfection. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."‡ It is a doctrine, you see, which will be maintained only by ignorant presumption. Were any person truly perfect, he would not stand in need of those institutions or means of grace, which God has provided for the perfecting of the saints. In particular, daily prayer for the forgiveness of sin would not be his duty; he would enjoy uninterrupted communion with God; would not be subject to discipline, which presupposes errors and failings; and, having spent a life undisturbed by pain and sorrow, would be translated, we may presume, into a better world without suffering death.

The possibility of perfection in the present state, could be conceived only by men who were ignorant of Scripture and of themselves. They must have first lowered the standard of holiness. They must have narrowed and abated the demands of the divine law, to meet their fancied attainments. It is impossible that any person in his senses, could suppose himself capable of performing that high obedience which the law, uncorrupted by human interpretation, evidently requires. We might justly call in question the veracity, or the understanding, of the man who should seriously assure us that he loved God with all his strength, and soul, and mind, and heart, and loved his neighbour as himself. At any rate, we may call in question his Christianity; for his sentiments are as contrary to those of a genuine believer, as darkness is to light. The latter is distinguished by a humble estimate of himself. He acknowledges that he fails more or less in every duty, that he is daily guilty of sin, that he could not stand if God should enter into judgment with him, and that he has no hope of acceptance but through the mediation of Christ. As these acknowledgments are dictated by his feelings, so they are in exact accordance with the Scriptures. The perfectionist belongs to a different class; and his arrogance and self-confidence manifest that, while he boasts of occupying the first form, he is a mere tyro in the school of Christ, and has need that some one should teach him what are the first principles of the oracles of God.

* 2 Pet. i. 5—8. † Conf. xiii. 2. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 23
‖ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

LECTURE LXXV.

ON SANCTIFICATION.

Sanctification the Work of the Three Persons of the Godhead—Their Several Offices—Nature and Effect of the Spirit's Operations on the Souls of Believers in Sanctification—Christ, the Pattern of Sanctification—Rule of Sanctification, the Word—External Means of Sanctification—Faith as a Means of Sanctification.

HAVING in the preceding lecture explained the nature of Sanctification, I proceed to take notice of sev-

* Rom. vii. 23. † Eccl. vii. 20. ‡ 1 John i. 8.

eral particulars, the consideration of which is necessary to give us a complete view of the subject.

I shall speak, in the first place, of the Author of Sanctification; and here we shall see that, like other divine works, it is ascribed to all the Persons of the Trinity. I would remark, in general, that there is no inaccuracy or confusion in attributing the same work sometimes to one Person and sometimes to another; because, although the Persons are distinct, the Essence is one and indivisible; and because the same work is said to be performed by one, in one view, and by another, in another. In relation to the present case, all the persons in the Godhead are concerned in the sanctification of the soul; but a different office is assigned to each.

First, This work is ascribed to the Father in those passages in which prayer is offered up to him, that he would sanctify us, and make us perfect in every good work, and in which he promises to circumcise our hearts to love and fear him, and to give us a new heart and a right spirit.* In the economy of redemption, he is exhibited as the fountain of grace. All spiritual blessings are his gifts; they originate in his goodness, and are bestowed according to his will. To this blessing he predestinated his people before the foundation of the world; and he appointed and prepared the means by which it was attained and is actually communicated. As "this is the will of God, even our sanctification," so it is by his power, (exerted in the manner which will be afterwards pointed out, when we come to speak of the agency of the Spirit,) that the renovation of the soul after his image is begun, and advanced, and perfected.

Secondly, The work is ascribed to Jesus Christ, "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."† He is the Author of this work, as he has obtained for us the privilege of sanctification, by his obedience unto death. This may be explained in two ways. First, He has done that, in consideration of which God bestows so great a blessing upon us. In ourselves, we were unquestionably unworthy of it; and in creatures guilty and polluted, there was nothing to induce God to restore his image, which they had impiously defaced. As the whole obedience of our Saviour was performed not for himself but for us, and as it was meritorious in the highest degree, not simply because it was perfect, but because he was a person of infinite dignity, his righteousness is to be considered as the procuring cause of those supernatural influences by which we regain that holiness in which man was created, and which was the chief glory of his nature. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." He "loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."‡ Secondly, Jesus Christ has removed the curse, which retained men under the dominion of sin by keeping them at a distance from God; and has brought them into a state in which they may receive those influences by which the purification of their nature will be effected. That you may understand this point, let me remind you that the guilt of sin, or the curse of the law, which is founded upon it, is a mighty and insurmountable obstacle in the way of any gracious communication from God to the sinner. Hence the law is said to be "the strength of sin."‖ It is its strength, as it protects it, if I may speak so, against any power which could overthrow or weaken its dominion, and leaves it at full liberty to exert itself in enslaving more and more its unhappy subjects. While men remain in this state, all the arguments which are employed to convince their understandings, to awaken their consciences, and to interest their affections, and all the dispensations of Providence, whether calculated to alarm or to allure, have no permanent effect. The divine blessing, without which Paul plants and Apollos waters in vain, does not accompany them. By the removal of guilt, a channel is opened in which the grace of God flows into the soul; and thus you perceive the connexion between the death of Christ and our sanctification. "Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."* The sanctification which was the immediate design of his death, is not moral but legal sanctification; and it signifies, I apprehend, in this place, our dedication to the service of God by the removal of the guilt of sin, which was the great impediment to our acceptance; but moral sanctification is the certain consequence. "Our old man," says the same apostle, in another Epistle, "is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."† The language is highly figurative, but is not difficult to be understood. Our old man is our corrupt nature; and it is said to be crucified with Christ, to signify that, in virtue of his death upon the cross, the power of sin is broken. The proper effect of an atonement is not purification from the pollution of sin, but deliverance from guilt; but the former is ascribed to the sacrifice of Christ as well as the latter, because it brings us under the operation of grace, because it consecrates us to God, who gives the Holy Spirit to qualify us for his service. This remark is necessary to enable you to understand several passages of Scripture which speak of this subject, and to prevent you from misapprehending the language of Theologians, who sometimes express themselves in such a manner as might lead you to think, that the death of Christ is not only the meritorious, but the efficient cause of sanctification. This impression is made, when we are told that we are sanctified "by receiving the atonement into our hearts," and by "having the blood of Christ conveyed into our hearts;" and even when such Scriptural expressions as have been quoted are used without explanation. The language of Scripture, with respect to the effect of the death of Christ, was better understood in the apostolic age than it is now, because sacrifices were then offered by both Jews and Gentiles, and every person knew their design, and the efficacy which they were supposed to exert. The language of Scripture is always proper and emphatic; but when metaphors occur, if we wish to convey distinct ideas into the minds of others, we must give the literal sense; and, if there is any danger of mistake, we should guard against it by the use of plain and appropriate terms. He who contents himself with telling us that we are sanctified by the death of Christ, or by the sprinkling of his blood, explains nothing; and, by dealing much in such phraseology, is apt to mislead.

In the third place, This work is ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Hence we read of the renovation and sanctification of the Spirit,‡ and our walking in God's statutes is said to be the effect of the inhabitation of the Spirit in our hearts. The grace by which we are sanctified, proceeds from the Father by the Son, and is applied by the Spirit. Thus all the Persons of the Trinity are concerned in our restoration. The part which each acts is important and necessary, and the office of the third Person is not less glorious than that of the second. Our attention is peculiarly directed to our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is right that it should be so, for

* 1 Thess. v. 23. Heb. xiii. 21. Deut. xxx. 6. Ezek. xxxvi. 26, &c. † Tit. ii. 14.
‡ John xvii. 19. Eph. v. 25—27. ‖ 1 Cor. xv. 56.

* Heb. xiii. 12. † Rom. vi. 6.
‡ 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Peter i. 2. Tit. iii. 5, &c.

he appears with great prominence in the scheme of our salvation, and offered the atonement by which all the divine perfections were glorified in the highest, and the everlasting covenant was confirmed. But without the co-operation of the Spirit, his labours and sufferings would have been in vain. In a state of moral insensibility, with blinded minds and unfeeling consciences, men would have made no use of the atonement for their reconciliation to God, and continuing in the pollution of sin, which renders them loathsome in his sight, they must have been excluded from his presence, and the blessedness of communion with him. Christ purchased redemption, but the Spirit applies it. The work of Christ was accomplished by his humiliation, and sorrows, and death; it, as it were, strikes our senses, and on this account makes a more powerful impression. But if we attentively consider the work of the Spirit, we shall perceive that it also displays grace, and love, and power, worthy of the highest admiration. To enter into a human soul foul with the deepest stains, in which every thing revolting to the holiness of his nature is exhibited, and to exert his influence there to purify it, and render it capable of the refined and exalted joys of religion, is a proof of condescension and benevolence surpassing conception. He meets with resistance, but he does not retire; the resistance is strong, all the power of corrupt nature being called forth to oppose his design; but he subdues it by the same Almighty energy which reduced the elemental chaos into order. In his plastic hands, man, an outcast from his Maker, so vile as to be the object of abhorrence, and so helpless as to be given over as irrecoverably lost, is transformed into a being adorned with the similitude of his Creator, devoted to his service, and destined to live in the happy seats of the spirits of light. Let us remember that we are under infinite obligations to our Sanctifier, as well as our Redeemer; and let his love be the subject of our devout meditations, and awaken our grateful praises.

That the sanctification of the soul is the work of the Spirit we certainly know; but the manner in which it is effected, we are not able to explain. We know also that all things were created by God, but cannot tell how he created them; that in him we live and move and have our being, but are ignorant of the mode in which his power is exerted to sustain us. Our Lord signifies that there is something mysterious in this matter. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."* Means are employed, but their efficacy depends solely upon him. It is his power which begins and carries on the change that takes place in the sentiments and affections of the soul. We cannot call it merely a moral power, consisting in the presentation of arguments and motives to the mind, because upon this supposition, it would differ in no respect from the means themselves, or from the part which one man may act in persuading and exciting another to the love and practice of virtue. If we call it a physical power, we must mean that the soul is endowed with new faculties of perception and feeling, or that its natural faculties are rendered capable of certain acts, for which they were previously unfit. The truth is, although this term has been sometimes applied to the power exerted in regeneration and sanctification, we cannot affix any distinct idea to it; and it is questionable whether those who use it, can explain what they mean to their own satisfaction or that of others. It would seem therefore to be the wisest and most modest plan, instead of attempting to describe the nature of this power, and the mode of exercising it, to content ourselves with the general knowledge of the fact, that it is owing to the operation of the Divine Spirit upon the soul—that it is sanctified.

A question has been agitated among divines, whether there is a formation of holy habits in the soul, or sanctification consists solely in the influence of the word upon its several faculties, upon the conscience, will, and affections, through the medium of the understanding. The controversy is somewhat obscure, and perhaps the parties have, occasionally at least, contended in the dark, and they were not always distinguished by metaphysical acumen. The point at issue seems to be, whether there is a real change effected in the soul itself, or it is only morally acted upon by the word of God, coming in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. Habit commonly signifies a disposition to act, or a power of acting acquired by previous acts. In the present case it signifies merely the disposition or power without a reference to previous acts, as it is acknowledged that the power or disposition is not the effect of our prior efforts, but of a divine operation. But if this is a just definition of habit, it must also be acknowledged that gracious habits are infused into the soul; for in saying so, we mean nothing more than that the subject of sanctification possesses certain dispositions, or inclinations, to act according to the rule laid down in the Scriptures. We may not be able to understand what constitutes a disposition or habit of the mind, but the fact is certain that there are habits, intellectual and moral; and there is no more difficulty in conceiving them to be formed by supernatural than by natural means. The great objection to the denial of habits, and the attribution of the holiness of Christians exclusively to the influence of the word, is that it represents them as not permanently but transiently holy, as having no indelible character impressed upon them, as holy only when they feel the influence of the word. This view of the matter supposes a change not in their state, but in their exercise; for if the word were not acting upon them, they would be in all respects like other men who have never experienced its power. But it is implied in the idea of a saint, that he is possessed of holy dispositions when they are lying dormant, and all his faculties are in a state of inactivity; and that there remains something which distinguishes him from the unregenerate, even when he has fallen into sin. It must be acknowledged that this objection to the denial of holy habits is strong; and that, if what is called the grace of God in the heart is reduced to the direct or immediate operation of the word in exciting our faculties, it is not easy to see how a man can be a saint when he is asleep, or has his thoughts wholly engrossed by something different from religion; or is for a time under the prevailing power of temptation, like David or Peter. At the same time, there is a mode of speaking about habits which is unguarded, and has perhaps led to the opposite extreme of denying their existence, such language being used as imports that they are something distinct from the soul in which they reside; that the grace of God is a substance within a substance, and not merely an effect produced upon the soul or its faculties. We cannot speak of spiritual things without making use of terms which primarily relate to external objects; but some writers, from want of judgment and taste, indulging in an unnecessary grossness of language, materialize subjects, in conceiving which the senses and the imagination can give no assistance. Discarding such phraseology, we maintain that a change is produced in the soul by the mysterious operation of the Spirit, through which it acquires an inclination to act, or a power of acting in a particular manner; that this inclination or power is not occasional but habitual; that it remains when it is not in exercise, as any natural disposition is in the soul although it should not be excited by the presence of its proper object; and that there is at all times a specific difference between the

* John iii. 8.

renewed and the unrenewed man. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him."*

The pattern according to which believers are sanctified, is the holiness of the divine nature. "Be ye holy, for I also am holy." "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."† Man was created in the image of God, and the design of sanctification is to restore him to his original state. We are like our Maker in the spiritual essence of our souls, we are like him in power; that is, our rational and active nature exhibits some traces of those attributes; but our perfection and glory consists in our resemblance to his holiness. It is to the holiness of God as manifested in Christ, that believers are conformed by the agency of the Spirit; and hence Christ may also be considered as the pattern after which believers are sanctified. I speak of him, not as the second Person of the Trinity, although in this character he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, but as incarnate or clothed with our nature, and in it exhibiting all the graces and virtues which constitute our assimilation to God. We see in him what human nature was, when it was formed by the hand of the Creator and he looked upon it with approbation; and what it must become that it may be pleasing in his eyes, and may be admitted into his glorious presence. Christ should be contemplated in two lights, as an atonement and as an example. In the one character he has made peace between us and our offended Maker; in the other he has shown us what our Maker is, in respect of his moral attributes, and what he requires us to be; how we should think, and feel, and act, so as to be imitators of God. That he is the pattern according to which those who are the subjects of divine grace are formed, is evident, from his own command to follow him; from the description of true Christians, as "having Christ dwelling in them;" from the purpose of God that all the members of his family should be conformed to the image of his Son; and from the effect of the Gospel upon believers, who are changed by it into "the same image from glory to glory." "He is the first-born among many brethren," superior in dignity, and the model after which they are fashioned. We are exhorted to be "followers of the saints;" and from the contemplation of their character and conduct, we may derive much valuable instruction with respect to our duty, and powerful excitement to the performance of it. But we must not follow them implicitly, because we know that they were liable to error and infirmity, and that some of the most distinguished among them have given melancholy proofs of weakness and depravity. The apostle Paul has pointed out the limits within which they should be imitated. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."‡ Thus far we tread upon sure ground; but when we can trace no correspondence between them and him, it is our duty to forsake them. In him alone we can safely confide, in whose conduct the eye of omniscience did not perceive a single flaw, and whom the voice of the Father proclaimed to be "his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased." Let us look to him when we are "running the race set before us."

The rule of sanctification is the word of God. I mean, that this is the rule according to which the Spirit works, forming in us those dispositions which it promises or requires, and the rule according to which we should work in the whole course of our Christian profession. Those who have been emancipated from the service of sin, obey, according to an apostle, that form of doctrine which has been delivered to them; they walk in the light of the Lord and keep his testimonies and statutes. Without multiplying Scriptural references, it is evident to every attentive reader of the sacred writings, that the soul is sanctified by being brought under the illuminating and commanding influence of the word of God. Holiness is our conformity to what it enjoins; and when our thoughts, volitions, and aims, our words and actions, correspond with its letter and its spirit, we are saints in its estimation. No human rule has any right to interfere with our obedience, or should be permitted to dictate to us. Men have devised a variety of observances and practices, in which they have supposed holiness to consist; and, by punctual attention to them, have appeared to themselves and to others to have attained a high degree of sanctity. The Pharisees received with sacred respect the traditions of the elders, fasted often, gave more tithes than the law enjoined, frequently washed their hands and the vessels which they used, that they might avoid every kind of defilement. In imitation of them, many Christians have distinguished themselves by superstitious usages. They have withdrawn from human society, and spent their lives in deserts and monasteries. They have abstained from the flesh of animals, and confined themselves to a vegetable diet; they have macerated their bodies by frequent fasts and severe penances; they have gone on toilsome pilgrimages to visit holy places; they have bound themselves to devote a certain portion of their time to the repetition of prayers; they have entered into vows of poverty, celibacy, and blind obedience to their religious superiors. The professed design of these observances, was to promote the interests of piety and holiness; but they have uniformly failed, because they were not of Divine institution. As we cannot serve God by doing what he has not commanded, and still less by doing what he has forbidden, so it is presumptuous to expect his blessing upon means which, being introduced as supplementary to his ordinances, very plainly import that, in this respect, man is wiser than he. Even when used only as auxiliaries to holiness, they must be equally ineffectual, because the communication of grace depending absolutely upon his will, there is no reason to believe that human interference, whatever may be the motive, with a matter which it is his province to regulate, will induce him to deviate from his plan, and to give countenance to the idea, that we know better than our Maker what are the most proper expedients for our moral improvement. He who would please God and obtain his blessing, must adhere closely to his word, "which is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify him, and enjoy him for ever."

As there is a pattern and a rule of our sanctification, so there are means appointed for carrying it on, to the consideration of which I am naturally led by the preceding observation. Those suggested by human wisdom, we have rejected; let us attend to those which God himself has ordained.

First, It is evident that, as the word of God is the rule of holiness, so it is a mean admirably adapted to promote its own design; because it not only points out and inculcates our duty, but presents many considerations calculated to work powerfully upon the will and the affections. It not only delivers naked precepts, which recommend themselves to us by our perception of their conformity to reason and truth; but it exhibits them in all the loveliness of example, in the history of the saints, and particularly in that of our Redeemer. Holiness, if I may speak so, appears in an animated form, and, displaying all its graces before us, fixes our attention, and engages our love. The idea of the ancient philosopher is realized by the incarnation of virtue; and although his prediction is not fulfilled, that all men would fall down and adore it, yet this is the effect upon those whose hearts are made, by Divine grace, to feel its attractions. The word of

* 1 John iii. 9. † 1 Pet. i. 16. Matt. v. 48. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 1.

God holds out the greatest encouragements to the study of holiness, in the promises of Divine assistance with which it is replenished. How well calculated these are to promote the design, will be manifest to every person who has seriously reflected upon his own moral weakness, and has felt the paralyzing effect of such meditation. 'How is it possible for me,' the sinner is apt to exclaim, when he is called to purify his heart, 'how is it possible for me to cleanse myself from the pollution of sin? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? Then may I, who am accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.' In this state of despondency, the word of God affords us relief by assurances of supernatural grace. When it says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," it adds, "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* It places before us the most interesting motives—the love of God, and the love of Christ; the invaluable benefits which have already been bestowed upon us, and the new blessings which we may expect to obtain; the peace, the consolation, the joy, the hope with which our heavenly Father refreshes the souls, and recompenses, in this world, the services of his obedient children. In short, it displays before the eyes of the runner in the Christian race, the glorious prize which awaits him at the end of his course, the immortal crown which the righteous Judge will bestow upon him. We know, from experience, the efficacy of hope in stimulating and sustaining our exertion. The Scriptures enlist this principle of human nature in the service of religion and exhort us to be "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."†

In the second place, All the other ordinances are means of sanctification. I shall take notice of these two, Prayer, and the Lord's Supper. Prayer, besides its direct tendency to impress the mind with a sense of divine things, to heighten our reverence and esteem for the object of worship, to increase our desire for the blessings which we ask, and our abhorrence of the evils from which we implore deliverance; prayer, besides these effects, which it is morally fitted to produce, has, for its direct object, the obtaining of the communications of grace. It consists, not only of adoration and thanksgiving, but also of petition. It is the application of a sinful creature, conscious of guilt, wants, and wretchedness, to the infinite mercy and beneficenee of the Creator; and, as it is authorized by his command, it never fails, when it is presented in the name of the Mediator, to bring down the blessing. Its effect is similar to that produced upon the face of Moses by his intercourse with God. The soul, returning from the sanctuary, shines with spiritual glory. By strength not his own, the Christian overcomes difficulties, repels temptations, and advances with a steady progress in the path of obedience: "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need."‡ The connexion of the Lord's Supper with the sanctification of the soul is equally manifest. The very emblems which are used, point it out as an institution adapted to the purpose of invigorating the graces of the Christian. As bread and wine furnish nutriment to the body, so the body and blood of Christ, or, in other words, his atonement and its benefits, contribute to the nourishment of the soul. While the ordinance powerfully impresses upon the mind the unspeakable love of Christ and the great evil of sin, and thus excites two principles of mighty efficacy in the purification of the soul,—gratitude to him and abhorrence of it,—it is the medium of communication between the Saviour and his faithful disciples in whom he works anew by his Spirit, to carry on to perfection the good work which he has begun. Sitting at his table, and partaking of his bounty, they renew their baptismal vows in humble dependence upon his grace, by which only they shall be enabled to perform them. They devote themselves to his service, not from necessity, but from choice; not merely because they are bound to do so, but because they prefer him to every other master. A deep sense of what they have enjoyed, and what they have done, remains. Their faith is more confident; their love is more ardent; their resolution is more firm; their state of mind is more spiritual and heavenly. Like a way-faring man, who has rested and been refreshed at a place of entertainment, and then resumes his journey with renovated vigour, they go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion." "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."*

In the third place, The dispensations of Providence are means of sanctification; "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."† The apostle makes use of the universal term "all," to signify that nothing is excluded, and that there is a co-operation of events to promote the spiritual interests of believers. And here we must admire the infinite wisdom and Almighty power of God, who renders subservient to his merciful designs, things which are not only considered as evil, but are evil in themselves, have a tendency to evil, and were they not controlled and regulated by his superintending care, would be productive of the most injurious effects upon the bodies and the souls, the present and the future well-being of his people. But, as in medical treatment, substances which are nauseous to our senses, substances which, when received into the system, cause in the first instance pain, and substances which are deleterious, are administered in such quantities and with such mixtures, that the ultimate effect is the removal of the disease and the confirmation of health; so it is in the economy of heaven. The object aimed at, is the spiritual health of the patient; and this is the result of the bitter draughts which he is compelled to swallow, and of the pain of amputation to which he is sometimes subjected. The Scriptures frequently speak of affliction as contributing to the progress of holiness: "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."‡ You observe the process. Affliction calls into exercise, and strengthens the graces of the Christian, and terminates in the more powerful diffusion of Divine love in the soul, in a more powerful impression of the love of God to us, or a stronger emotion of love on our part to God; by either of which our promptitude and sincerity in serving him will be increased. The sanctifying effect of affliction is pointed out in many passages of Scripture, and it was experienced by the Psalmist, who says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have learned thy law."‖ It is the discipline which our heavenly Father administers to the members of his family, and it is so necessary and so salutary that none of them is exempted. It is a proof of his love, because his design in correcting them is, that they may be partakers of his holiness. How blessed are the fruits of sanctified affliction! They are the fruits of righteousness, and are of far greater value than the most esteemed temporal blessings. They humble the pride of the people of God, awaken their vigilance, make them feel their own weakness,

* Phil. ii. 12, 13. † 1 Cor. xv. 58. ‡ Heb. iv. 16.

* John vi. 57. † Rom. viii. 28. ‡ Ib. v. 3—5. ‖ Ps. cxix. 67.

create a stronger abhorrence of sin, and an increasing indifference to earthly things; inspire a meek submission to the will of God, and, leading the thoughts to heaven, stir up longing desires for the peace which awaits them there, and for the pure joys of religion, which are earnests of its felicity. I have confined the illustration to the effects of adversity, but all the dispensations of Providence, under the direction of Divine wisdom and goodness, have the same tendency, and are included in that comprehensive plan of benevolence, which God is carrying on for the final happiness of the objects of his love.

These are the means which God employs in sanctifying his people; but as many who are exposed to their influence manifestly derive no benefit from them, it is evident that their efficacy does not arise from their fitness to the end, but from the operation of the Spirit. Besides the external means, there are certain exercises of the soul itself, which are subservient to the great design, and which, as they are the effects of the Spirit, may be considered as internal means by which the work is carried on. The following things are necessary to the sanctification of a sinner; that he be in a state in which he can partake of divine influences, that those influences be actually communicated to him, and that his views and feelings be such as shall make holiness the object of his choice, and carry him forward in the practice of it with delight. I shall show you that these pre-requisites are obtained by faith, to which as a secondary cause our sanctification is ascribed.

First, By faith we are united to Christ, and thus are delivered from the curse of the law, which prevented the communications of divine grace to the soul, as we formerly showed. To those who believe, his righteousness is imputed, in consequence of which they are reconciled to God, and are the subjects of his favour. Thus the way is prepared for the restoration of his image. "Wherefore," says Paul to the Romans, "ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."* Stript of figures these words signify, that, through the atonement of Christ received by faith, our connexion with the law or covenant of works is dissolved, and being united to him as our living Head, we are enabled to perform those holy duties by which God is glorified. 'The body of Christ,' is the sacrifice of his body on the cross; our 'death to the law,' is our redemption from the curse; our 'marriage to Christ,' is our union to him, and 'the fruit which we bring forth to God,' is the acceptable obedience of the heart and the life.

Secondly, By faith we receive sanctifying grace from the fulness of Christ. God has constituted him the source of spiritual influences, and faith the mean by which they are derived from him. Human reason may inquire what peculiar virtue in faith has procured its appointment to this office, and may conceive that other means were better adapted to the end. To us it is sufficient to know the will of God, that his Spirit shall be given to those alone who look to his Son, and trust in him for assistance in the great work of their salvation. When the believer lives, it is Christ who lives in him. He is exhorted to "be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus,"† who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."‡ Christians are kept in a state of absolute dependence upon him, so that the good qualities which they possess, and the good actions which they perform, are more properly his than theirs. "Abide in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me."‖

Thirdly, Faith produces a state of mind which is itself holy, and tends to the increase of holiness. The reasons and motives which the Scripture employs to promote the study of holiness, have no effect till by means of faith they make an impression upon the conscience and heart. In vain do we contemplate the perfect and attractive example of our Saviour, unless by the medium of this grace a living virtue flow from him into our souls, to transform them into his image.

In particular, it is by faith that we obtain a comfortable sense of the love of God; and it is this which enlarges our hearts to run in the way of his commandments. It is the opinion of many, that nothing will so powerfully stimulate us to diligence as a state of uncertainty with respect to the issue, and that our activity would be relaxed by the confident belief that we already enjoy the favour of God. But those who think so, betray ignorance of the gospel plan of sanctification. In the economy of grace, privileges are the foundation of duty. Doubts and fears damp the ardour of the soul, and enervate its exertions. When the mind takes such views of the character of God as create a spirit of bondage, it is disqualified for performing acceptable service to him. The temper in which we do serve him is offensive, because it is founded in disbelief of his word, and the works done under its influence must be rejected as a corrupt thing. He who obeys in the spirit of a slave, will do his duty reluctantly and tremblingly, and is incapable of the zeal, the promptitude, the strenuous efforts, which characterize the man who is born from above. Our obedience to God will not be cheerful and uniform, and continued from year to year amidst discouragements and difficulties, unless we love him; and we cannot love him, unless we have some hope at least, that we are the objects of his love. Hence we perceive how necessary faith is, by which this hope or persuasion is attained. Never will the exercises of the Christian harmonize more fully with the will of God, never will his desire of holiness be stronger, and his efforts to make progress in it be more vigorous and successful, than when he is looking up to him as his gracious Father in Christ, contemplating the wonders of his love in redemption, and rejoicing in the present sense of his favour, and in the hope of infinite and ever-enduring blessedness in the world to come. "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments."*

There are several other particulars connected with the subject of sanctification, which I would have introduced if time had permitted. I might have shown you that the work is progressive, like the shining light which shineth more and more to the perfect day; that it is sometimes suspended, but never totally destroyed; and that it is completed at death, when the souls of believers are made perfect in holiness. I might have also pointed out its advantages, and its tendency to glorify God, and adorn our profession; but I shall leave these topics to your own meditations.

LECTURE LXXVI.

ON GOOD WORKS.

Good Works, the Fruits of Regeneration—Meaning of this Phrase—Nature of Good Works: Necessary that they should be Conformable to the Law of God; be Performed from Respect for his Authority, from Love to Him, and with a View to his Glory—Possible only to Believers—General Remarks respecting them.

HAVING explained the privilege of sanctification, I proceed to speak of good works, which are the fruits

* Rom. vii. 4. † 2 Tim. ii. 1. ‡ 2 Cor. xii. 9. ‖ John xv. 4.

* Ps. cxix. 166.

of the change effected by divine grace in the soul. We have already seen, that they are not the condition of justification, which is obtained solely by faith, but that they are not therefore unnecessary, because there are many reasons why a believer should perform them, and many important purposes which they serve. I do not intend to resume these topics, but in this lecture shall confine myself to an illustration of their nature, and some remarks of a general kind.

The phrase, Good Works, is often understood in a sense too limited, and which gives an imperfect view of the effect of supernatural grace, and of the duty of a Christian. If you attend to the manner in which the expression is frequently used, you will find, that it comprehends only a part of the works to which "believers are created again in Christ Jesus," and that the most important part is omitted. Many seem to have no idea of any good works, but those which are enjoined by the second table of the law; and their morality is summed up in sobriety, justice, and benevolence, of which the principal or sole object is the temporal welfare of our brethren. The great design of Christianity, as they represent it, is to render us temperate, kind, and charitable. It is thus that the natural aversion of the heart to God discovers itself, even when it is professedly inculcating obedience to his law. The duties of which he is the immediate object are overlooked, or treated as of inferior importance. We are not surprised to find this mutilated morality taught by infidels, who are Atheists or not much different, and consider all religion towards God as superfluous and absurd; it being their opinion that it is not by prayers, and praises, and other exercises of piety, that we are to please him, if there is such a Being and he takes any notice of our conduct, but by acting properly in the various relations subsisting between us and our brethren. But it is lamentable, that the language of Christian teachers should so often show, that they have studied in the same school. When some of them talk of good works, we hear much of meekness, and candour, and beneficence, and the forgiveness of injuries, but little or nothing of faith, and love to God, and the dedication of the heart to him, and zeal for his glory. It is not a false charge which has been brought against such men, that they preach heathen morality; for it is separated in a great measure from piety, and chiefly consists in the social virtues. When we speak of good works, we understand the words in the most extensive sense, as comprehending the whole duty of man, prescribed in both tables of the law; and we remember the declaration of Him, whom alone we call our Master, that "to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, is the first and great commandment."

I would observe farther, that there is often a very incautious way of speaking concerning the relative value of good works. They are not only contrasted with faith to the depreciation of the latter, from ignorance, it may be presumed, of what faith is, of which I know not a more notable specimen than may be found in a well-known paper of the Spectator concerning faith and morality;* but they are represented as the ultimate end of religion, as the terminating point of its wonderful apparatus of contrivances and means. Thus, other important matters are thrown into the shade. Faith is undervalued; the atonement is overlooked, or regarded only as an expedient for advancing the interests of virtue; nothing is heard of but eternal and immutable morality; and so large a space does it fill in the understandings or imaginations of some men, that all other points of religion dwindle into insignificance, and they adopt the celebrated but senseless maxim, that it matters not what is our creed, if our life is orthodox. The ultimate end of religion is the glory of God in the salvation of sinners; and his glory is manifested not only by their obedience to his law, but by every part of the scheme of redemption; by the process, so far above the ideas and calculations of reason, which has reconciled his justice and mercy, and restored his lost image in the soul of man. But, although it were granted that the object to which the several steps in the plan of redemption are subservient, is the sanctification of our nature, which puts it again into a capacity to serve and enjoy its Creator, we should still object to the extravagant importance which is assigned to good works; for this reason, that by good works, those who speak of them in this manner, principally or exclusively mean the common duties of life; and were they honestly to state their sentiments, it would appear that the design of religion is accomplished, in making us good members of families, good neighbours, and good subjects of the state; not too strict and scrupulous, however, but attentive to decorum, and free from any gross and habitual vice. But all this might have been effected, without the circuitous method which has been adopted; without the death of a divine Redeemer, and the descent of the heavenly Spirit; by a plain rule of duty, and the operation of natural sentiments and affections. The design of Christianity is nobler and more extensive, namely, to make man holy in heart, as well as in life; to inspire him with the love of God; to give God the supreme place in his affections, that he may love his fellow creatures only in subordination to him, and for his sake; to establish the empire of the Divine will in his conscience, and to secure the prompt and cheerful performance of all the duties, of those which respect God, in the first place, and of those which respect man, in the second. Good works, as commonly understood, are only a branch, and, to speak still more correctly, are only fruits, of the holiness which religion infuses into those who are subject to its influence. The design is to make all things new; to fill the mind with light, and the heart with love; to form beings on whom their Maker can look with unmixed complacency; and, when this great moral change is completed, religion may be said to have attained its end.

I now proceed to inquire into the nature of good works. Here it is proper to observe, that something is necessary to make a work good in itself; and that other things are necessary to make it good as performed by us.

That a work may be good in itself, it must be enjoined by the law of God, the sole rule of obedience. The command of man cannot make a work good, unless it be, at the same time, virtually or explicitly commanded by God: the suggestions of reason do not possess sufficient authority, because it is not our supreme guide, and is liable to error. He who created us, has alone a right to prescribe the mode in which we should exert our faculties, and fulfil the purposes of our being. We find the sinful practices of the Jews sometimes condemned, simply on the ground that they were not commanded, and without a reference to their obvious pravity. "The children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord; they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart." And God says, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* On this ground, all those works are rejected, which are enjoined by superstition, and are supposed to possess so much merit, as to recommend the performer in a particular manner to the favour of God. The Papist undertakes pilgrimages to places fancied to be holy, sub-

* No. 459.

* Jer. vii. 30, 31. Matt. xv. 9.

mits to penances and frequent fasts, repeats appointed prayers in a given number and at stated times, and presents offerings to the church, in the full persuasion that his acts of piety are pleasing to God, and will procure a reward; but, as he proceeds solely upon the ground of human authority, he loses his labour, and his services are set aside by the simple question, "Who hath required this at your hands?" It is plain that duty is a relative term, and implies obligation; but the source of all moral obligation is the will of God. This is the reason why some things should be done, and other things should not be done. Our own opinion will not give goodness to our works; for, on this supposition, we should be a law to ourselves, and independent of the Sovereign of the universe: their goodness can arise solely from their conformity to the standard which the Divine authority has established.

Some moralists have maintained that the character of an action depends upon the intention of the agent, insomuch that, if a man have a good design, it will justify the means which he employs to accomplish it. This is the meaning of the celebrated maxim of certain casuists in the church of Rome, that *the end sanctifies the means;* and practically it is adopted by others who excuse themselves, and even claim praise, when they have erred, on account of the alleged purity of their motives. It is acknowledged that an action good in itself may become bad through intention; or in other words, it may be divested of all moral worth by being performed with an unlawful design, and the agent may be guilty of sin in the divine estimation. The giving of alms is not a virtue when it flows from ostentation; nor zeal for truth when it originates in pride and passion; nor prayer when the object is to be seen of men. But although intention may convert good into evil, it does not possess the opposite power of turning evil into good. To ascribe to it such power is to deny that there is any essential difference of actions, to render morality entirely an arbitrary thing, to represent it as continually changing its character, so that what is vicious to-day may be virtuous to-morrow, and what is vice in one man may be virtue in another, according to the views by which they are respectively influenced. It sets aside the law of God, and substitutes, in the room of a permanent standard, the every-varying decisions of the human mind, blinded by prejudice, warped by passion, and forming its judgments upon deceitful appearances and short-sighted calculations. The only province which ought to be assigned to intention in morality, is to give value to such actions as are conformable to the law of God, to the goodness of which it is indispensably necessary that the state of the mind be right. Men may think that they are doing God good service, but this idea will not exculpate them, if they are like the Jews, who sought to promote his glory by opposing the truth and persecuting its friends. It is sufficient to explode the doctrine of intention to consider the extent to which it would carry us; for upon this principle many of the greatest crimes might be justified, because those who committed them imagined that they were doing their duty.

No work, therefore, is good in itself unless it be commanded. The Church of Rome teaches, that there are works of supererogation, meaning by these, works which men are not bound to perform by any positive command, and which therefore exceed the measure of their duty, and create a superfluous degree of merit that may be transferred to others for their benefit. They are not required from any man; but they are recommended by what they call *counsels of perfection*, counsels to aim at higher attainments in holiness than are necessary to our salvation. They found this doctrine upon the advice or counsel of Paul* to the Corinthians, not to marry; and particularly upon the words of our Lord to the young man, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor."* With respect to the first, it is plain that abstinence from marriage was not recommended as a higher degree of holiness, but as good "for the present distress;" that is, as a matter of prudence, because it was a time of persecution, when those who were encumbered with families would be exposed to particular inconvenience and danger; and hence it appears that it is not a counsel addressed to Christians in general. With respect to the second, it was not a counsel, but a command to an individual, of whose sincerity our Lord was pleased to make trial, by demanding the sacrifice of all his earthly possessions. The perfection of which he speaks is not a higher degree of holiness than others had attained, but the perfection of sincerity; 'If thou wilt prove thyself sincere in seeking eternal life, go and sell all that thou hast.' It is a proof of deplorable blindness, of unaccountable stupidity, for any man to imagine that it is possible to exceed the measure of our duty; for what more can be conceived than is implied in these two commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?" This is a summary of the whole duty of man. The highest possible love to God, and the highest possible love to our neighbour, are already required; and our love to both is to be manifested in every way which Scripture and Providence may point out. Works of supererogation have no existence but in the vain imaginations of ignorant and self-righteous men. The Church of England says well in her fourteenth article, "Voluntary works, besides, over, and above God's commandments, which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arroganey and pride. For by them men do declare, that they not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required. Whereas, Christ saith plainly, 'When ye have done all that ye are commanded to do, say, We are unprofitable servants.'"

Having seen what is necessary to render an action materially, let us next inquire how it becomes formally, good. An action may be good in its own nature, and yet may be so vitiated by the state of mind in which it is performed, as to be of no value in the Divine estimation.

I observe, then, that it is requisite to the moral goodness of an action, that it be performed from respect for the authority of God. Its abstract nature is the same, when we are influenced by any other principle; but, then, it is not an act of obedience, and cannot therefore be acceptable to God, as our Lawgiver and Judge. Philosophers have inquired into the foundation of morality, and, as we might have expected, have come to different conclusions. They have told us, that it is agreeable to the fitness of things; that it is conformable to nature; that it is conformable to reason; that it is conformable to truth; that it is productive of good. But whatever theory we adopt, none of them proves any thing more than that there is a propriety, a decency, an order, an utility, in doing some things and not doing others. No proper obligation results from any of these systems; they do not take hold of conscience, and create the idea of duty. The Scriptures, disregarding all metaphysical speculations, go directly to the point, and lay down the only intelligible and practical foundation of morality, namely, the will of God. In reading them, you do not find that particular actions are enjoined upon the principles

* 1 Cor. vii.

* Matt. xix. 21.

of philosophy, but on the stronger grounds of religion. It is the will of God, that we should do this or that; it is his law, by which we should regulate our conduct. To do our duty, is not to satisfy the dictates of our own minds, but to express our reverence for him. Virtue is obedience, that is, conformity to the will of a superior; and the great example proposed to us, is that of our Saviour, who came "not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him."

From these observations it follows, that to constitute a work formally good, it must be done, not because it will please ourselves or others, but because it is commanded by God. Hence you perceive the reason that some works, which have a specious appearance, and excite the admiration of men, are rejected by the Searcher of hearts. The true principle of obedience is wanting. While the persons are acting in literal conformity to the law, the Lawgiver is not in all their thoughts. Hence also you may see whence that persuasion is necessary, of which the apostle speaks when he says, "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin."* This is not justifying faith, or faith in Christ, as has sometimes been imagined; and hence the words have been improperly quoted, to prove that none but believers can perform works acceptable to God: but it is an assurance in our minds, that what we are doing is right, founded upon the careful study of the law. If we should do what is lawful in itself, thinking it to be unlawful, to us it would be a sin; if we should do it without knowing any thing respecting its nature, the best that could be said of it is, that it is neither good nor evil. Then only are our works right, when we know them to be commanded, and do them because they are commanded.

I observe once more, That to the goodness of our works, it is necessary that they flow from love to God. Love to him is stated to be the sum of the first table of the law; and, although love to our neighbour is represented to be the sum of the second, yet, unless it be founded on love to God, it will not be a religious affection. It is conceivable that a man may perform a variety of duties because God has commanded them, and at the same time perform them unwillingly. Conscience may force him to act contrary to his inclinations. The principle which predominates may be fear; under the influence of which a person will earnestly and diligently do what is necessary to ward off the danger which he dreads; but he is only submitting to a less, in order to escape a greater evil. The works which he performs, are not his choice; he is impelled to them by a very different principle from that of obedience. Now, although his outward actions may be strictly conformable to the standard of duty, and much benefit may result from them to others and to the cause of religion, yet their moral worth is completely destroyed by the state of his feelings. No such service from a son would be pleasing to his father; nor would a master approve of a servant, however punctually he might execute his orders, whom he knew to be under the influence of a secret dislike to his duty. We see, then, that love to holiness is indispensably requisite. To the all-seeing eye of God the heart is manifest; and he looks more to its movements, than to the professions of the mouth and the sanctity of the conduct. So peremptorily does he demand the heart, and so necessarily does it enter into the essence of acceptable obedience, that nothing can atone for the want of its concurrence. It is in vain to think that we shall please God, while we entertain no friendly sentiments and dispositions towards him; and these, you know, are the native fruits of love. Love is the soul of duties, and the external action is the body. It is but the half, and the inferior half, which he gives who obeys without love. This point is so plain as to stand in need of no farther illustration; and I shall only add, that a single duty emanating from love to God, is of greater account in his estimation than the multiplied services of the hypocrite, who courts the applause of men, or is stimulated by the servile principle of fear.

Lastly, It is necessary that our works be done for the glory of God; for, as all things were made for him as well as by him, we do not fulfil the end of our existence, unless we constantly refer to his honour as our ultimate end. When men make *themselves* their end, when they aim at the gratification of their vanity, and the advancement of their temporal interests, or even at their eternal happiness independently of the glory of God, they serve themselves and not him. The character of actions is fixed by their motives; and there must be an essential moral difference between actions which proceed from a regard to ourselves, and those which are influenced by a regard to our Maker. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."† The doing of all things to the glory of God, is an expression of frequent occurrence, but often, perhaps, it is not distinctly understood. It suggests the idea of acting with a design to acknowledge him before our fellow-men, as a glorious Being, and to excite them to reverence, admire, and praise him; and this unquestionably is the tendency of those good actions which are of a public nature. But, as this should be the end of all our actions, even of those which our brethren have no opportunity to observe, to do all things to the glory of God, properly signifies, to do them from love to him and respect for his authority, and is therefore virtually included in the qualifications of good works which have been already mentioned. A Christian can have no intention to display the glory of God before others in his secret devotion; but he does give him due honour, even in his closet, by the pious emotions of his soul, by adoration, confession, and thanksgiving, by reverence and gratitude, and the exercises of faith and hope. Now, if we understand nothing more to be meant, than that we should do all things in obedience to his command, and from a profound regard to his character and perfections, we shall see that there is no occasion to agitate the question, Whether there should be, in each action, a distinct reference to his glory, or a general purpose to glorify him be sufficient? because it will be evident, that all our actions should be performed in the spirit of religion, and that every action so performed is good. If we are not impressed at that moment with his authority, and have no desire to please him, the action is no part of acceptable obedience.

It is so evident from what has been said, that good works can be performed only by such as have been translated into a state of grace, that it is unnecessary to mention it distinctly; and besides, this important point was fully considered when we were explaining the subjects of regeneration and sanctification. In man, prior to his conversion, there dwells no good thing; and the fruit will be corrupt, till the nature of the tree is changed: "We are created" in Christ Jesus unto good works;‡ that is, good works are the effect of the renovation of the soul by the Spirit of God. "I am the vine, ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me."§

It is an obvious inference from the preceding discussion, that works truly good can be performed only by those who believe and live under the influence of the Gospel. There is no difficulty, therefore, in determining what estimate we should form of the boasted virtues of the heathens. They have been pronounced to be *splendida peccata*;‖ but, by many, this has been

* Rom. xiv. 23.

† 1 Cor. x. 31. ‡ Eph. ii. 10. § John xv. 4, 5. ‖ Splendid sins.

deemed a harsh and uncharitable judgment. It would be a satisfactory mode of settling the dispute, or, at least, it might make a stronger impression upon some, if, instead of dwelling on vague generalities, we would come to particulars; and, having demanded a specification of the virtues in question, should then proceed to subject them to the test of Scripture and sound reason. I believe that the imposing display which is made to pass before us, by the power of declamation and loose panegyric, would thus lose much of its splendour, and would be reduced within a narrow compass; and that certain actions, when brought near and strictly examined, would not appear in the same light as when viewed at a distance, and surrounded with the false glory which ignorant admiration and prostituted eloquence have bestowed upon them. Instead of assuming it as a fact capable of demonstration, that some of the heathens were eminently virtuous, their advocates should show us what their virtues were; and then, I am confident, we should find that they were few in number and of a dubious character, if not altogether unworthy of the name. It is intolerable to hear Christians giving the name of virtue to the mere exercise of the natural affections without any religious motive; to acts of natural courage; to patriotism, as it is commonly understood and was exemplified among the Greeks and Romans; to a proud morality, which elated the possessors with self-conceit, and led them to claim an equality, or a superiority to the gods. If it be true that a work is not good unless it be performed from respect for the authority of God, the works of heathens were not good; because they could not have an intention to obey him whom they did not know, and their virtues were founded solely upon self-respect, or a sense of propriety, or views of utility. If it be true, that no work is good unless it is done with a view to please God, and from love to him, the works of the heathens were not good; for, as a celebrated author has observed, "before the Christian religion had, as it were, humanized the idea of the Divinity, and brought it somewhat nearer to us, there was very little said of the love of God. The followers of Plato have something of it, and only something; the other writers of pagan antiquity, whether poets or philosophers, nothing at all." The popular deities could not be the objects of love; and the true God, whom some are supposed to have known, removed from common apprehension and wrapt up in the obscurity of his nature, was regarded with distant reverence, and furnished only a subject of speculation. If it be true that no work is good which is not performed for the glory of God, the works of heathens were not good; because we are assured by an apostle, concerning the wisest and best of them, that they did "not glorify him;" and we know that the great design of their virtues was to gratify their own feelings, and to gain the admiration of their countrymen. Why should it be deemed harsh to pronounce this sentence upon the virtues of the heathens, even although they had been more numerous and more perfect than they are? What makes some men so feelingly alive to their reputation, while, without scruple, they accuse of hypocrisy persons around them, who are far more virtuous even than Socrates; and, in support of this charge, are ready enough to tell us that the external appearance is of no avail, if the motives are corrupt? It is easy to assert that the motives of heathens were pure; but it is as easy to prove that they were not and could not be pure, ignorant, as they were, of the true religion and destitute of the grace of God. The words of Peter to Cornelius have been often quoted, to prove that the works of heathens are pleasing to God, as well as those of Christians; but they are grossly perverted. "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but, in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him."* Any person who considers the context, will see that they do not teach that men of every nation may work righteousness; but that, to whatever nation those who work righteousness belong, they are accepted. No two things can be more different; and that the latter is the true meaning is evident, because the apostle is speaking in reference to the prejudices of the Jews, who believed that they were the objects of the Divine favour, to the exclusion of every other people. This he now discovered to be an error; for, in the case of Cornelius, God had shown, that if there were any righteous Gentiles, they also were acceptable to him. But Cornelius, let it be remembered, was not such a Gentile as Socrates, or Cato, or Aristides, but one who knew the true God, and worshipped him.

There is one qualification remaining, which may be thought necessary to the goodness of our works, namely, that they should be perfect; for it may be said, that since the law of God requires them to be perfect, any defect will change their character, and render them sins rather than duties. Now, it is acknowledged that all the works of the saints are imperfect. There is not one of them who can truly say, that he loves God with all his heart; or that, in the full sense of the expression, he loves his neighbour as himself. The flesh lusts against the spirit, and impedes its operations. The regenerated have been compared to a man lately recovered from sickness, whose motions are feeble and languid; and hence, there is something in their best works for which they might be rejected. But let it be observed, that although the works of the saints do not exactly correspond with the demands of the law, they do not labour under any essential defect. The principle is right, and the motive is right. The defect lies only in degree. They are not perfectly good, but still they are good. They are *so far* conformable to the requisitions of the law, but not to the full extent: they are acts of obedience to the will of the Lawgiver. The metal is not free from alloy, but it is gold. Imperfect works would be certainly rejected, if offered as the ground of justification, because, in this case, a righteousness without a single flaw is the indispensable condition; but, when viewed in another light they are approved, because there is much in them which is pleasing to God. To this should be added, that they are presented to him through the mediation of his Son. For his sake, what is evil is forgiven; and what is good, being recommended by his merit and intercession, comes up before the throne of heaven as incense, and as the evening sacrifice.

Good works are incumbent upon the followers of Christ without distinction. From some civil duties persons of certain orders and professions are exempted, in compliment to them or from the necessity of the case; but the authority of the law of God has no limits, and none are too high or too low to be subject to its operation: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God be careful to maintain good works; these things are good and profitable unto men."† It may be observed, however, that all good works are not formally incumbent upon all; but that, while some are universally obligatory, others are binding only in particular circumstances. Works of justice, temperance, and piety, are required from all without exception, because no situation can occur in which it could be justifiable to refrain from worshipping our Maker, to indulge irregular appetite, or to defraud and injure our neighbour. But every man is not bound to give alms, because some are so poor as to be themselves the objects of charity; and there are many duties which arise out of the relations of men to one another, and which therefore cannot be demanded from those who do not stand

* Acts x. 34, 35.

† Tit. iii. 8.

in such relations. He fulfils his duty, who endeavours to glorify God and to do good to men, by the faithful exertion of the powers conferred upon him and the diligent improvement of the opportunities which he enjoys, by moving in his own sphere and performing the particular service which the Master of the household has assigned to him.

Every person has it in his power to perform good works. I do not mean that he has by nature moral ability, but that he has means and opportunities. Of possible things there are some which one man can do, and another cannot; and of duties, as we have seen, some are not incumbent upon all, but are required only in particular circumstances; but there is no person, however obscure his station and limited his powers, who is under the necessity of remaining inactive. Every man may practise self-command, and every man ought to cultivate piety towards God, and charity towards his brethren. There is not an individual who is not somehow connected with others, and is not called to some relative duties. If he has nothing to bestow in the form of alms, and no influence to exert in behalf of the temporal interests of his brethren, he can give them his good offices and good counsels; and these are comprehended under the denomination of good works as well as more substantial deeds; for what we speak, as well as what we do, falls under the prescription of the law, and God is glorified both by our words and by our actions. Where is the man who may not speak a word in commendation of religion, or for the instruction and consolation of his acquaintance and strangers? It is surely a good work to communicate knowledge to the ignorant, to silence the gainsayer, to reclaim the backslider, to warn the tempted, to cheer the melancholy, and to encourage the dying. If a man were living in a solitude, he might still perform acceptable works; for he could there mortify his appetites and passions, improve his graces, carry on his necessary labours in the spirit of religion, meditate plans for the good of his fellow-men if he should ever again mix with society, and make the desert resound with the voice of prayer and praise.

This leads me to remark, that there are many good works existing in their first principles which are never brought to perfection, but which the eye of God beholds with approbation. Such are the benevolent purposes and pious wishes of the saints, springing from love to God and to man, which are not matured from the want of circumstances favourable to their development and growth. As there is much evil which never assumes a sensible form, so there is much good which never attracts human observation. But He sees it who searches the heart; and as in some cases he has taken public notice of it in his word, so we may believe that it will be made known in the day when all secrets shall be revealed, as no small part of the goodness by which his people will then be distinguished. "The Lord said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart."* Good intentions, although they should fail to accomplish their object, are not lost. They are treasured up in heaven, and will receive their reward. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."†

There are two extremes with respect to good works, into which men have been betrayed through the perverseness of their hearts, and ignorance of the truth. Some have ascribed merit to them, and represented them as the procuring cause of justification and eternal life; and others, totally mistaking the design of those passages which declare them to be useless for a particular purpose, have rejected them as altogether unnecessary, and pronounced it to be dangerous to inculcate them. In the days of the apostle James there were persons of this description, who trusted in an unproductive faith; and even our own age has given birth to Antinomian teachers, who, in their injudicious zeal against those who oppose the law to grace, exalt grace upon the ruins of the law. These men give great countenance to the objection against justification by faith, that it weakens the obligations to holiness, and supersedes the necessity of it. They are appealed to as living proofs that the objection is true. But we have formerly seen that there is no foundation for it in the doctrine when scripturally stated.

Antinomianism is indignantly exploded by all the enlightened friends of the gospel, and their due place is assigned to good works in the system of religion. But it seems to have tainted the minds of not a few who in words disavow it, as we may infer from the suspicion or dislike with which they view expositions of moral duties, and the desire which they discover to be always entertained with discourses on the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. The time was, when the minister who explained and enforced relative duties in detail was heard with a jealous ear, and was in danger of being assailed with the accusation of legalism. This unfounded prejudice, I believe, is passing away; but it still retains its influence upon the weak and ignorant. Good works should always be inculcated upon Christian principles; and when they are placed upon a proper foundation, and enjoined for the ends which the Scriptures point out, they are an important and necessary part of public instruction. Ministers should "affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works."* This is the command of Paul, and he does not act in his spirit, who, intimidated by popular clamour, always insists on doctrinal topics. In this case he pleases not God but man. The ignorance which finds fault with him is entitled to no respect, and if the censure is dictated, as in some cases we have reason to suspect, by a worse principle —the disinclination of the human heart to holiness, and the presumptuous hope of salvation without it—it should be treated with the contempt which it deserves. When men would separate what Christ has joined together, and set one part of his religion in opposition to another, the audacious attempt should rouse the holy zeal of all the friends and defenders of the truth. By the same authority which explodes or throws into the shade one part of the system, the other may be subjected to the same dishonourable usage. If one class of men demand faith to the exclusion of works, another may as reasonably demand works to the exclusion of faith. He is a wise steward, who arranges every thing in its proper place, and brings it forth in its order and season. He is a faithful minister, who inquires not what are the fancies and tastes of his audience, but what is the truth; and regardless of human censure or applause, fearlessly teaches men "to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded them."

It has been sometimes said, that it is unnecessary to be particular in inculcating good works, because if men are brought to believe in Christ, obedience will certainly follow. This sage remark supposes that divine grace operates upon believers, not agreeably to their rational nature, by instruction, exhortation and admonition, but instinctively, and contrary to the plan which is actually adopted in the dispensation of religion, where there is an ample provision of means for promoting the sanctification of the soul; and what is more, it represents those parts of Scripture as useless in which duties are detailed and enforced, our Lord

* 2 Chron. vi. 8. † 2 Cor. viii. 12.

* Tit. iii. 8.

as having spent his strength in vain while he was preaching his sermon on the mount, and the apostles as having filled up with moral lessons a considerable space in their Epistles, which would have been more usefully occupied with doctrinal discussions. The opinion which leads to such conclusions is worse than absurd.

LECTURE LXXVII.

ON CONSCIENCE.

Connexion of this Subject with the Preceding Lectures—Nature of Conscience—Its Office—Its Fallibility—The rule of Conscience, the Will of God—The Scriptures the only Rule to Believers—Their Adequacy and Supremacy as such—Authority of an Erring Conscience—God alone the Lord of Conscience.

Having finished what I intended to say on the three great privileges of believers in Christ, justification, adoption, and sanctification, I deem this the proper place to introduce some observations on Conscience, which is intimately connected with those privileges. Two things are necessary with regard to it: that it should be freed from a sense of guilt, which is the cause of great disquietude and alarm; and that it should be purified from the errors and corruptions by which its right exercise is impeded. The first effect is produced in justification, when the sinner is pardoned, and, through faith, is filled with peace and joy; the second is the work of sanctification, in which the illumination of the mind, and the mortification of unholy appetites and passions, give it new ability and new liberty to execute its functions with fidelity.

Let us begin with inquiring into the import of the term. Conscience is the Latin word in an English form, and *conscientia* is a literal translation of the Greek word συνειδησις. Both terms evidently import something more than simple *knowledge*, which would have been expressed by *scientia* and ειδησις. Compounded as they are with prepositions which signify *with*, they suggest the idea of conjunct knowledge; and this has been explained in various ways. This power, say some, is called conscience, because it conjoins knowledge with knowledge—universal knowledge, namely, of the law, with particular knowledge, namely, of the fact, by applying the one to the other. Thus, after a man has done a certain action, he reasons in the following manner: 'I know that such an action is forbidden by the law of God; I know that I have done this action, and therefore I have committed a sin.' This process is an operation of conscience; and it consists in bringing together our knowledge of the law and our knowledge of our own conduct. Others explain the matter, or at least express it, somewhat differently, calling conscience the knowledge which a man has with himself as with another; by which they mean, I presume—for their language is awkward and obscure—that conscience consists in the knowledge of our actions, and a comparison of them with the standard of duty in our own minds. Another mode of explaining the term, is to consider the conjunct knowledge of which it is expressive, as referring to the knowledge of men and the knowledge of God, and intimating that both are employed about our actions. While we know, God knows them; and of this important fact it is the office of conscience to remind us. There are two witnesses of every thing we do, our own consciousness, and the Great Being in whose presence we always are.

Conscience ought not to be confounded with consciousness. The latter term denotes our knowledge of what is passing in our minds, and does not relate to external things. I am conscious of my own existence, but am not conscious of the existence of any other person, however firmly I may believe it. Conscience is conversant not only with what is passing in our minds, but also with our external actions; with our thoughts and actions which are past, as well as with those which are present; and with the actions of other men, so far as they are the subject of moral judgment. It is different also from the understanding, the province of which is to acquire the knowledge of the nature, and qualities, and relations of objects, and to pronounce what is proposed to it to be true or false, by means of its intuitive perceptions, or by a process of reasoning; while the objects of conscience are more limited in number, and present themselves under a different aspect. They are considered, not as true or false, but as good or evil, morally good and morally evil.

Among Scholastic Divines, and some more modern authors who have transplanted their barbarous terms and distinctions into their writings, it has been a subject of discussion, whether conscience is an act, a habit, or a faculty. If I apprehend the meaning rightly, those who call it only an act, deny that conscience is a distinct power of the mind, and conceive it to be merely an occasional application of our knowledge of right and wrong to our actions. Those who call it a habit, seem to hold that it is not natural to men, but is the effect of instruction and discipline. Conscience, they say, is knowledge, and knowledge is a habit, or something acquired; thus confounding the improvement of a faculty with the faculty itself. If, because our knowledge of right and wrong is acquired by education and reflection, it follows that conscience is not an original principle of our nature, it would be easy to prove, by the same kind of reasoning, that there is no such original principle as intellect. Some attempt to evade this difficulty, by distinguishing habits into innate and acquired, and telling you that conscience is something between these, and partakes of the nature of both; and then ending with such an explanation as, if it have any meaning, amounts to this, that after all, conscience is a faculty, although they choose to call it a habit. Such is the useless trash, under the name of Logic or Metaphysics, with which many theological volumes are filled.

It has been disputed, among men of more correct and luminous modes of thinking, whether conscience should be considered as a distinct faculty of the mind, or merely as the exercise of its other faculties upon a particular subject, and in a particular form. Conscience has been pronounced to be an operation of the judgment, comparing one thing with another—our actions with the standard of duty—and pronouncing their agreement or disagreement. But there is no reason for excessive simplification. We have only to go a step farther, and deny that the soul has any distinct faculties, and that what we call such, are only different modes in which it exerts itself; but, although this were true, it would serve no purpose but to introduce a change in human language, and to set aside as useless many of the speculations of philosophy. If we say that the soul has understanding, because it is capable of knowledge; that it has judgment, because it compares; that it has will, because it chooses and refuses; there seems to be no reason why we should not say also, that it has conscience, because it distinguishes right and wrong, and approves or disapproves of our actions. There seems to be a particular reason why we should account it something more than an operation of the understanding, namely, that there is not a simple perception of agreement and disagreement between the standard of duty and our actions, but an approbation or disapprobation of them, with an anticipation, pleasant or painful, of the consequences. By philosophers, it has been sometimes called the moral sense. They have given it the designation of

a sense, to signify that it perceives right and wrong, as the taste perceives sweet and bitter; and of moral sense, to specify the objects about which it is conversant. But, although the term, sense, is sometimes applied to our internal feelings, yet I look upon the phrase, moral sense, as an incongruous combination of terms, and prefer conscience, not only because it occurs in the scriptures, and is adopted by theologians, but because it is free from ambiguity, and, from association at least, reminds us of an authoritative rule of action, and of a supreme Judge; while the moral sense implies a reference to neither. Besides, to call conscience a sense, implies, that we have instinctive moral perceptions; a supposition which does not accord with experience, and proceeds upon the gratuitous assumption, that this faculty is different from all our other mental faculties, which remain in a dormant state till they are excited, and require culture to fit them for the performance of their functions.

It has been objected against considering conscience as an original power of the mind, not only that it seems to be wanting in some individuals, but that its operations are not uniform. What is esteemed virtuous at one time, becomes vicious at another, and conscience is found to pronounce opposite sentences upon the same action. What the ancient Greeks, for example, practised without shame, is now held in universal abhorrence; and, even in modern times, if you only pass a river, a mountain, or an imaginary line, you shall find different ideas of morality prevailing upon the one side and the other. Hence, conscience appears to be a factitious thing; the result, not of the constitution of our nature, but of education and custom. Having been taught to look upon one action as criminal, we refrain from it, and upon another as good, we practise it; but a different training would have inverted our ideas, and made us regard the former as laudable or harmless, and the latter as infamous or unbecoming. But this reasoning against the existence of a moral principle, is more specious than solid, and might be employed with equal success to disprove any other of our mental faculties. Might it not be shown in the same way, that we have not the power of perceiving truth, because some individuals are born idiots, and men in all ages have been subject to the strangest illusions, and have embraced innumerable errors; and what has been admitted as unquestionably true at one time, has been rejected as manifestly false at another. Did we mean by conscience, an instinctive perception of the moral qualities of actions, it would be a conclusive argument against it, that men's perceptions have been so various and contradictory; but as we mean only a power in the human mind of perceiving them, the modifications to which it is subject from external circumstances, will not appear to any sound reasoner to be a proof of its non-existence.

I have not given a formal definition of conscience; but from the preceding observations you will perceive what I understand by it. It is that faculty which perceives right and wrong in actions, approves or disapproves of them, anticipates their consequences under the moral administration of God, and is thus the cause of peace or disquietude of mind.

A question has been proposed, whether it is possible for conscience to err; and although it seems to be a plain one, yet it has not received a uniform answer. Some have adopted the negative, affirming that conscience cannot err. They distinguish between a judgment of the mind, and a judgment of conscience, and say, that the former may be false, but that the latter is always true; not reflecting that, if conscience has any connexion with the understanding, as it must have if it is founded on knowledge, it must be subject to the same errors with the understanding. To support their opinion, they define conscience to be a clear and certain knowledge of the objects with which it is conversant. Now, there is no doubt that, if this definition is admitted, the inference which they draw from it is undeniable; for it is manifest, that, if our conceptions of any subject are distinct and adequate, our judgments concerning it must be conformable to truth. The amount, therefore, of what they say, is, that we cannot be mistaken when we are certainly right; but, for this profound discovery, no man, I presume, will think himself obliged to its authors. We may affirm any thing of any thing, if we are allowed to give an arbitrary definition of it. And this definition of conscience is undoubtedly arbitrary; for conscience, so far as it implies knowledge, is not perfect and infallible knowledge, but that degree of it which we have obtained by the exercise of our intellectual faculties, and with which many errors may be blended.

But some maintain the infallibility of conscience upon a different ground. If conscience may err, they say, it follows that God has deceived us; for he gave us this faculty, and it is his candle shining within us. If God had given conscience as the only rule of our conduct, if he had commanded us to rely with implicit confidence upon its dictates, and if it were still as perfect as it ever was, we might say that the errors into which we are led by it are imputable to its Author. But not one of these pre-requisites is true. Conscience is not our only rule, as we shall afterwards see; its dictates are not therefore to be implicitly obeyed, and it has not continued uninjured amidst the ruin of our moral nature. Conscience, which derives all its light from the understanding, must receive it, if I may speak so, obscured and discoloured as it flows from its source. Does any man say, that, when our understandings err, God has deceived us? No; and let no man say that he has deceived us when conscience errs; for, what is conscience but the application of the knowledge of the understanding to our practice, as a test to examine it? By what law was God bound to preserve conscience from being tainted by sin, any more than our other faculties? It was, indeed, impossible to have preserved it in purity, when the understanding, upon which it depends, was perverted and blinded. It is inconceivable how this notion of the infallibility of conscience could have been adopted by any man who had read his Bible, had reflected upon his own experience, had observed the conduct of others, and, in a word, was possessed of an ordinary portion of common sense. Such is a specimen of the absurd opinions which Theologians of great name have sometimes advanced. As they come in our way, we must take notice of them; but in doing so, there is a waste of precious time.

Let us now proceed to the rules of conscience. It is evident that conscience is not a rule to itself. Man comes into the world entirely destitute of knowledge, and gradually acquires it as his faculties expand; but in his state of greatest improvement, he is too ignorant of God and himself to be his own guide. It is not enough that his intention is good. If he had been created without power to distinguish between right and wrong, or had been left without the means of ascertaining his duty, there might have appeared to be a reason for saying, that to mean well would be sufficient to recommend him to his Maker. But, since there are moral distinctions, and the knowledge of them is confessedly not beyond the reach of the human faculties, it is not to be imagined that our conduct can be acceptable to God, unless it be conformable to them. Those distinctions are founded in the nature of things, or in the will of the Creator, and must therefore be a law to all reasonable creatures. To suppose the intention to sanctify our actions, is to suppose that virtue and vice are not essentially different; that actions

themselves are nothing in a moral estimate, and that the only thing to be considered is the motive or the end. Thus man would, indeed, be a law to himself, and would be accountable only for his designs; every other thing would be exempt from the Divine jurisdiction. Conscience, then, must have a rule. It is plain that the rule is not the example of others, although wise and good, because the best of men are imperfect, and are liable to errors and infirmities; because, even their virtuous actions are not to be imitated, unless we be in similar circumstances, and in the application great mistakes may be committed; and because, without another rule, we could not know whether they were right or wrong. It is implied in the proposal to imitate them, that their actions are good; and this supposition further implies, that there is a standard to which they are conformable. Thus we are led, at the second step beyond them, to that standard as the rule; and exhortations to imitate them, whether delivered in the Scriptures, or by our fellow-men, can only be understood as a call to do what they have done, when we know it to be right from some other source.

I may add, that the opinion of men is not the rule of conscience, any more than their example, because they may mislead us, either from design or from their own previous error. Hence we are commanded to call no man master, and to give this honour to Christ alone; and it is said in reference to the dogmas and commands of men, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."* In the church of Rome, the doctrine of probability is maintained, or the doctrine that a man may safely do any thing for which there is a probable reason. And how is this probability to be obtained? Not by searching the Scriptures, but by consulting the Doctors; and if a few of them concur in sentiment, nay, if even one of them pronounce that a thing may be safely done, the person whom he advises may do it, whatever it is, without incurring guilt. Thus the whole law of God has been disannulled, and a sanction has been given to every abomination; for doctors have been found in that Church, who have patronized by their authority every conceivable vice. This is an extreme case; but it shows us the danger of submitting to be guided by the opinions of men. As they and we are subject to the same standard of duty, their opinions can be considered only as their interpretations of the law, which are not authoritative, and ought to be compared with the law itself before they are received.

Casuistical writers distinguish the rules of conscience into two classes. The first is the original, supreme, and independent rule, namely the will of God, by whatever means it is made known to us. The second class comprehends the laws of men, and our own voluntary engagements, as vows, oaths, promises, and covenants. Now, there is no doubt that a man is bound in conscience to fulfil the engagements into which he has entered to God, and to his fellow-men; that they lay him under an obligation which he cannot violate without guilt, it being always presupposed that they are lawful, and that they constitute rules by which his conduct should be regulated. It is equally certain that we are subject to the authority of others, as parents, masters, and magistrates, whose commands we ought to obey; and their commands may be called rules of conscience, as by them different classes of relative duties are pointed out and enjoined; yet they are only subordinate rules, and in fact are no rules at all, if we understand by a rule, a regulation possessing intrinsic authority. Whatever *power* our superiors may have to enforce obedience, conscience duly enlightened does not recognise their *authority*, unless it perceive an agreement between their commands and the law of God. In truth, the commands of our superiors stand in the same relation to conscience, in which the sentences of inferior magistrates stand to the subjects of a state. The latter have no authority in themselves, and all their authority is derived from the law of the land; insomuch that, if they are not conformable to it, they may be treated with contempt, and the magistrate would be punished if he should proceed to enforce them. The power of our superiors over us is founded in the law of God, made known by the light of nature or by revelation; their commands are binding only when that law gives them its sanction; and even our own engagements are not obligatory unless they accord with it, for a promise, a covenant, an oath, a vow to do what is sinful, is in itself null and void, and guilt will be incurred, not by violating but performing it. It follows that the moral obligation of our own engagements, and the moral obligation of the commands of our superiors, are resolvable into the will of God. Here, as in the former cases, our reasoning ends; and therefore, in strict language, his will is the only rule. There is danger in assigning this office to the commands of men, however much we may qualify it. The ignorant and the careless may be led to ascribe more to human authority than its due; and if they should not go so far as to maintain, with the infidel philosopher,* that virtue and vice are created by the will of the civil magistrate, may however imagine that rulers in church and state have the power of dictating to conscience, of subjecting our civil and religious liberty to restraints to which it would be sinful to refuse to submit, and of making things indifferent, to be duties as sacred as the most express injunctions of the divine law. The apostle Paul, when giving direction to Christians with respect to their civil duties, calls upon them to be subject to their rulers, "not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." But does he mean to insinuate that any new obligation upon conscience arises from their commands? No; his own reasoning shows that the obligation results entirely from the authority of God. "Wherefore ye must needs be subject," that is, as stated in the preceding verse, because "he is the minister of God;" and he thus expresses himself in the beginning of the chapter. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God."† Magistrates, being armed with the power of the state, may compel their subjects either to do what they please, or to suffer; but their moral power is derived from, and limited by the law of God; and it is only when they are considered as acting by his authority, that conscience calls upon us to obey them.

It appears, then, that the rule of conscience is the will of God, or his command which prescribes our duty. This will is the rule of obedience to all intelligent creatures; it is the rule to angels, as we learn from these words of the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word."‡ It was the rule to our Saviour when he sojourned among men. "My meat," he said, "is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."‖ To the rule which directs angels, and directed our Redeemer, it is right that we should conform. This will of God is wise and just, and there would be impiety in supposing that there could be any obliquity or irregularity in the conduct which it prescribes. As it is wise and righteous, so it is good and beneficent, always aiming at our wel-

* Isa. viii. 20.

* Hobbes. † Rom. xiii. 1. 4. 5. ‡ Ps. ciii. 20.
‖ John iv. 34.

fare, as well as the glory of our Maker; for the tendency of all the commands which it issues is to promote the order and happiness of the universe. It is the will of the Creator, to which creatures should bow with profound reverence. It is the will of a Master, whom his servants ought to obey. It is the will of a Father, which his children should regard not only with respect, but with gratitude.

The will of God is known by the light of nature. Some notions of morality are found among those who do not enjoy the advantages of revelation; and these are accompanied with a sense of obligation; that is, there is a conviction in the minds of men that they ought to do some things, and ought not to do other things. There remain treatises on morals drawn up by the Greeks and Romans, in perusing which, while we observe many defects, we cannot but admire the progress which they had made in the investigation of the various classes of relative duties. It is evident too, that conscience performed its office among them, not only from particular instances of its power in disquieting and alarming certain distinguished transgressors, but from express references to it, and their recorded declarations, that some actions were pleasing, and others were offensive to the gods. *Mens sibi conscia recti*,* was a good conscience, and *convictus conscientia*,† was a man condemned by his own mind. This is expressed by the apostle Paul in the following words: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."‡

To Christians the rule of conscience is the word of God, in which his will is fully and clearly expressed. It is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and is able to make us "perfect, and thoroughly to furnish us for every good work."‖ To those who enjoy it, reason is only necessary to enable them to understand the propositions contained in it, to collect together the precepts which are scatterd here and there, and to apply them to the various cases which occur in the progress of life. Sometimes the Scriptures enter into detail; but had they attempted to point out all the minutiæ of duty, they would have swelled to such a size as would have defeated their design, because few could have found leisure to peruse them, and still fewer would have been accurately acquainted with their multifarious contents. In studying them, therefore, with a view to the direction of conscience, it is necessary to attend to such particulars as the following. They sometimes content themselves with laying down principles, and leave it to us to deduce the consequences. They forbid the species, in forbidding the genus under which it is included. Thus, when they condemn injustice in general, they condemn its endless modifications. At other times, by condemning one species, they condemn all the other species which are comprehended under the same genus. The prohibition of adultery in the seventh commandment, extends to every kind of uncleanness. When an external action is commanded or forbidden, the law is applicable to the disposition or principle from which it proceeds. When alms are enjoined, charity or love to our neighbour is required; and hatred is prohibited when it is said, "Thou shalt not kill." When a duty is prescribed, the means of performing it are also prescribed; and when a sin is forbidden, every thing leading to that sin is also forbidden. In a word, when the Scriptures condemn a particular vice, they recommend the opposite virtue; and *vice versa*, when they recommend a particular virtue, they condemn the opposite vice. Thus, there is no sin which the word of God does not condemn, and no duty which it does not enjoin, in one or other of these ways. There are, indeed, few sins or duties which it does not specify with more or less particularity, by express precepts, by threatenings, by promises, by exhortations, by commendations, or by examples. It is therefore a perfect rule. There are no deficiencies which the doctrines and commandments of men might supply. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."*

After this account of the Scriptures, the general truth of which has not been disputed among Protestants, you will be surprised to be told that they are not an adequate rule of conscience. So Bishop Sanderson asserts, in his celebrated treatise *De Obligatione Conscientiæ*;† and I know not how many others. The word, adequate, signifies in English, and in Latin from which it is derived, *equal*, *proportioned*, and conveys the idea of something fully adapted to its end. It therefore sounds strangely in our ears to affirm, that the Scriptures are not an adequate rule, and we are curious to learn the reasons. The first is, that an adequate rule supersedes the necessity of any other; but there is another rule, namely, the light of nature, which is a law to the heathens. According to this wonderful reasoning, no system of rules, however perfect, can be adequate to direct us in practising an art, if there should happen to be another system, although greatly inferior to it. Perhaps this writer affixed a new and unusual meaning to the term, or rather, he seems to have confounded two words which are totally distinct—*only* and *adequate*. It is not true that the Scriptures are the *only* rule of conscience, because those "who have not the written law, are a law to themselves;" but it is true that they are an *adequate* rule, because they contain a perfect revelation of the will of God respecting our duty. Another reason is taken from the design of the Scriptures, which is to make us wise unto salvation; to direct us to spiritual ends; to excite us to perform those things which nature dictates, from the higher principles of love to God, and faith in Christ; whereas the office of conscience, it is said, is to consider actions, not as spiritual, but as moral; and to inquire, not whether they are performed from charity, and to a spiritual end, but whether they are good or evil, lawful or unlawful. From the latter part of this argument, it would appear that conscience has to do with our actions, but not with our motives, than which nothing is more manifestly false; and the former part of it, although brought forward with an opposite design, actually proves that the Scriptures are an adequate rule, because they carry morality to the greatest possible perfection. It is unnecessary to attend to his other reasons, as you are, I presume, satisfied with the specimen which you have heard. It will naturally occur to you, that there must have been some cause which led a man esteemed wise and learned, to argue so inconclusively; and he has not been at pains to conceal it. If the Scriptures are the adequate rule of conscience, it will follow that nothing is binding upon conscience which is not expressly or virtually enjoined in them. But this limi-

* A mind conscious of right intention.
† A person convicted by his conscience.
‡ Rom. ii. 14. 15. ‖ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

* Ps. xix. 7—11. † Concerning the Obligation of Conscience.

tation would not have answered the purposes of his Church, which claims authority to decree rites and ceremonies in religion. If the Scriptures are an adequate, and consequently the only rule of conscience to those who enjoy them, these decrees will not be binding; but, if you can contrive to show that the Scriptures are sufficient only for certain ends, and that there are other things for which a different rule is wanted, you may succeed in subjecting Christians to the doctrines and commandments of men. Thus even great men, under the influence of prejudice and self-interest, do not regulate their opinions by the Scriptures, but pervert and misrepresent them to favour their opinions. And thus, even among Protestants, there remains not a little of the spirit of Popery; for the steps which make way for the admission of the authority of the Church to enjoin any thing as necessary in religion, which God has not commanded, led by degrees to the establishment of the antichristian system, under which the traditions of the fathers, the decrees of councils, and the bulls of the Popes, were exalted to a level with the commands of Christ and his apostles.

The word of God is a rule, and, to speak properly, the only rule of conscience to Christians; other rules, which are obligatory, deriving all their authority from it. To this rule we are bound to yield unhesitating obedience; and when we comply with its duties, we do what is acceptable to God. But here a question arises, Whether the commands of conscience are binding, not only when it is enlightened by the Scriptures, but when it errs, and calls good evil, and evil good? This point requires to be treated with great caution; but, however strange it may at first appear, we do not see how we can come to any other conclusion but this, that men ought to act according to its dictates at all times, when there is no doubt or suspense in their minds; if the case is not clear, it is evident that they should wait till, by the due use of means, they have ascertained what is their duty. If conscience should pronounce any thing to be a sin which is not a sin, they ought to abstain, because they do not know the judgment to be erroneous, and would not be guiltless if they should act in opposition to it. The reason is, that supposing, as they do, the voice of conscience to be the voice of God, they could not transgress its orders, without expressly rebelling against what appeared to them to be the authority of God. "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus Christ, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean."* The apostle is speaking of an action which was not sinful in itself, and yet he declares that it was sinful to the man whose conscience pronounced it to be such. The judgment of conscience does not change the nature of actions, but it changes them to us; because the authority of God seems to us to be interposed either to command or to forbid. In the case to which Paul referred, the sin did not consist properly in the action itself, but in doing it in the persuasion that it was sinful. The judgment of conscience may be false, but we think it true; and in disregarding it, we disregard the Lord of conscience.

The observation, that the judgment of conscience does not change the nature of actions, paves the way for the resolution of the question, whether the general obligation to obey the dictates of conscience will exculpate us, when the action which conscience enjoins is in itself unlawful. Conscience, let it be remembered, is only a subordinate rule, to which we are properly under a moral obligation to yield obedience, only when it is conformable to the supreme rule; and the obligation of which we speak, results solely from the supposition of its conformity. It is not, as has been said, *regula regulans*,* but *regula regulata*.† An appeal may be always made from its decisions to the word of God; and as soon as a difference is discovered between its dictates and those of Scripture, the sentence which it has pronounced is made void. Hence it is plain, that the plea of conscience will not avail to exempt us from guilt and punishment. And this, we may observe, is the unhappy situation of those whose consciences are not duly enlightened, that they sin whatever they do, in disregarding the voice of conscience and in obeying it; a consideration which should excite every man to use the greatest diligence to ascertain what is his duty, and to pray for the Divine Spirit, who is promised to lead us into all truth. If I have made use of the word, obligation, in the present case, from the remarks connected with it there is no danger of mistaking its import. It does not, and cannot mean, that an erring conscience will justify us in doing what is morally wrong. The law of God is immutable. Our views of it may be incorrect; but no man would suppose, in any similar case, that misapprehension of the law could exempt a transgressor from the penalty. Paul, before his conversion, "verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus,"‡ being persuaded that Jesus was an impostor, and his disciples were apostates from the true religion. What he did, he did from conscience; yet he declares that he was a "blasphemer, a persecutor, and an injurious person," who needed forgiveness, and was pardoned only through the mercy of God.‖

There are persons to whom what has now been said would appear highly objectionable. What, they would ask, should a man act according to the dictates of an erring conscience? No; he ought to disobey it, and to regulate his conduct by the law of God. There are, however, some sayings which have an imposing sound, but when they come to be examined, are found to have little or no meaning, and this, I apprehend, is one of them. Those who have it most frequently in their mouths, it is to be presumed have never considered it. If they have any meaning, which is questionable, it must be this, that, if a man knows that his conscience is in an error, he ought not to obey it. But here they have no antagonists, and the case supposed is impossible, because, as soon as the error is discovered, it is corrected. To suppose a man's conscience to prescribe to him any action, after he knows it to be wrong, is absurd. What else do they mean? Is it that a man ought not to obey his conscience, although he believes its dictates to be right? What is this, but entirely to subvert its authority? No; they will reply, we only assert that it should not be obeyed when it is contrary to the law of God. But, in the mean time, we are persuaded that it is agreeable to the law, and yet we are told that we should pay no respect to its commands. We entertain no doubt, and yet should refrain from acting. We believe that God is speaking to us, but should sit still and fold our hands, because, in reality, he is not speaking, and we have mistaken another voice for his. But, if this reasoning, which is in reality devoid of meaning, be admitted, I am at a loss to conceive in what case we should obey conscience; for we never can be more sure of our duty than we at present are, although we may be sure on better grounds. The conviction, however, is the same, and must therefore either bind, or leave us at liberty in both cases.

Upon the whole, it appears that "God alone is Lord

* Rom. xiv. 14.

* *A rule that governs.*

† *A rule that is governed;* i. e. Conscience is not the supreme law, but (in an upright nature) is subordinate to the law, and regulated by it. ‡ Acts xxvi. 9. ‖ 1 Tim. 1. 13.

of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in every thing contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship."* Such is the doctrine of our Confession of Faith, and of sound reason; for nothing can be sin or duty, with which alone conscience is concerned, but what is such in virtue of the law of the moral Governor of the universe. It may be questioned, whether the Confession is consistent with itself, when it ascribes to the civil magistrate a power "to call to account, and proceed against those who publish opinions contrary to the known principles of Christianity,"† and "to take order that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God be duly settled, administered, and observed."‡ These passages would require an ample commentary; but, in the close of this lecture, I have only time to remark, that a power is given to the magistrate to restrain and punish not only crimes against the peace of society, but opinions contrary to the truth, that is, to what he conceives to be the truth. What then can be plainer, than that he is constituted Lord of the consciences of his subjects? It belongs to him to tell them what they should believe and profess. If it be said that he is to exercise this power according to the word of God, I answer, that it is according to the word interpreted by himself and his advisers; and consequently, their dogmas are the rule of our faith. If it be said again, that he does not interfere with conscience itself, but with our profession and practice, I answer, in the first place, that he cannot interfere directly with conscience itself, which, being an internal principle, is beyond his reach, and we owe him no thanks for not doing what is impossible; and, in the second place, that, to interfere with our profession is to interfere with conscience, because conscience calls us to avow what we believe to be true, and to act conformably to it; and this he will not allow. Such is a specimen of the shuffling methods by which it has been attempted to defend the Confession of Faith against the charge of contradicting itself, and taking away with the one hand what it has given with the other. I must add, however, that while the Church of Scotland holds the Confession, without explanation, the Church to which we belong has cleared herself from this inconsistency, by expunging from her creed every expression which imports the power of using compulsory measures in religion. We can honestly maintain, that God alone is Lord of the conscience, while we hold that our faith, and worship, and obedience, are to be regulated, not by the decrees of councils, and the edicts of magistrates, but by the supreme and infallible standard of Scripture.

LECTURE LXXVIII.

ON CONSCIENCE; PEACE OF CONSCIENCE; AND SPIRITUAL JOY.

Different States in which Conscience may Exist—Peace of Conscience, distinguished from mere Security, founded on Justification, and proportioned to the growth of Sanctification—Spiritual Joy: its sources; means of securing it.

My remarks upon conscience have extended farther than I expected, and I am therefore under the necessity of resuming the subject in this lecture, as there are several things not yet noticed, which are worthy of attention. Conscience is essentially the same in all men; but, like our other faculties, it exists in different states, and under a variety of modifications. I shall proceed to point out the distinctions which are commonly mentioned.

First, Conscience is distinguished into antecedent and consequent. Antecedent conscience is the faculty exercising its office in reference to actions to be performed, and pronouncing them to be lawful or unlawful. In this view, it is called a light within us, a law engraven on the heart, an impression made by the hand of God. Consequent conscience is the faculty exercising its office in reference to actions when they are past. It then pronounces them to be good or bad, worthy of praise or of blame, of reward or of punishment. In this view it is called an accuser, a witness, a judge. The design of the two epithets is to specify the two provinces assigned to conscience in the soul of man; namely, to warn him against sin, and excite him to his duty; and to approve of him or condemn him, according as he has regarded or disregarded its voice.

Secondly, Conscience is distinguished into enlightened or right, and erring. A right or enlightened conscience is properly instructed in the nature and extent of our duty, and its judgments are conformable to truth. I need hardly remark, that the source of the light which shines in it, is the Word of God. An erring conscience is mistaken in its judgments, and calls good evil and evil good. We have an example of an erring conscience in Paul before his conversion, who, "verily thought," or whose conscience dictated to him, that he should oppose the religion and persecute the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth; and an example also in all the unbelieving Jews, who had "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."* The errors of conscience arise from ignorance of Scripture, from misapprehension of its meaning, from the adoption of human opinions as the standard of conduct, and from the influence of the appetites and passions, by which the understanding is blinded and perverted. To this subject the following words of our Saviour refer: "If the light, which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"† The light which is in us, is conscience; and if it be darkened by error, our condition is truly pitiable, as we shall then wander into devious paths, and at the same time proceed with the greatest confidence, being fully persuaded that it is directing us aright.

In the third place, Conscience is distinguished into firm or assured, and doubting. By the former, we understand a conscience which has a clear perception of duty, and is embarrassed with no difficulties respecting the decision to which it ought to come. We have seen, indeed, that an erring conscience may be fully assured, and it often happens that men are never more confident than when they are egregiously wrong; but we are speaking at present of a conscience which proceeds upon the footing of clear, unquestionable evidence. There is no room for doubt, whether we should sanctify the Sabbath, obey our parents, pay our just debts, and relieve the necessities of the poor. But occasions occur when the mind has nothing to guide its decisions but conjectures and probabilities; occasions, when the equality of the reasons on both sides of a question leaves it in a state of suspense; occasions, when the arguments on one side preponderate, but some little difficulty, to which greater importance is attached than it deserves, hinders the mind from coming to a satisfactory conclusion. In all these cases, conscience is subject to doubt, more or less strong, according to the degree of the evidence for and against. And here I may take notice of what is called a scrupulous conscience, or a conscience which is in constant perplexity, making objections to every thing, startling at shadows, suspecting evil in what is perfectly innocent, and never able to decide whether what it does is lawful or unlawful. It arises from weakness of intellect, from

* Conf. chap. xx. § 2. † Ib. § 4. ‡ Ib. chap. xxiii. § 3.

* Acts xxvi. 9. Rom. x. 2. † Matth. vi. 23.

melancholy of temperament, from gloomy ideas of religion, from the spirit of superstition, from the prejudices of education which have established an arbitrary standard of morality, and from associating with the timid and narrow-minded. It is a cause of torment to the person himself, and a plague to those around him, who are perpetually in danger of offending him, and upon whose liberty he is incessantly endeavouring to encroach.

In the fourth place, Conscience may be distinguished into timid and delicate. These terms are sometimes confounded, but they convey different ideas. A timid conscience is easily alarmed, acts with hesitation, and is full of suspicions that there is something wrong in our actions. It must therefore disquiet the bosom in which it resides. A delicate, or tender conscience, is not a troublesome inmate, but a vigilant guide amidst the snares and dangers of life. It is feelingly alive to the calls of duty, and recoils even from the appearance of evil. It shrinks with instinctive sensibility from the touch of pollution. It is like a polished surface, on which the slightest breath is seen; it is like the eye, which is hurt by a mote, and makes an instantaneous effort to eject it. Tenderness of conscience does not resemble the soreness of a diseased part, but the nice discrimination of those organs which are most amply furnished with nerves. It is easily distinguishable from a scrupulous conscience; for they are real sins by which the former is offended, whereas those which the latter dreads are imaginary. This often strains at a gnat, and swallows a camel; but a tender conscience holds sin in abhorrence, when it presents itself in its most specious forms. Such was the conscience of the Psalmist, when he hated every false and wicked way, and esteemed God's precepts concerning all things to be right.*

In the fifth place, Conscience may be distinguished into awakened and hardened. When we speak of an awakened conscience, the epithet supposes it to have been previously asleep, and such is its state in a great part of mankind. I do not mean that its powers are absolutely dormant, for there are few who are not occasionally at least admonished and reproved by it; but that in general it does not perform its office with firmness and fidelity, but leaves the sinner in a great measure ignorant of his own character. It is said to be awakened, when it is roused, by the word of God or the dispensations of Providence, to the faithful performance of its duty; when it not only remonstrates against our present sins, but recals the past to remembrance; when it accuses and condemns the guilty man, and anticipates the ratification of its sentences at the tribunal of God. A hardened conscience is without feeling. It has lost its power through a long course of transgression, so that it opposes no obstacle to the sinner, gives no warning, denounces no threatening, but permits him to do as he pleases. The mind is so blinded, that it does not perceive the difference between good and evil, or the heart is so callous, that the perception makes no impression upon it. In this state conscience is sometimes said to be cauterized, from the Greek word καυτηριάζω, which signifies, to *brand* or *burn with a hot iron*. It is used in the first Epistle to Timothy, and is translated "seared with a hot iron,"† the metaphor being founded upon the effect of hot iron, in rendering the part of the body insensible to which it has been applied. Some, however, understand it to mean that the consciences of the persons spoken of are spotted or marked with sin, as if they had been branded. Be this as it may, the idea commonly suggested by a seared conscience is, that it has lost all feeling.

In the last place, not to multiply particulars, Conscience may be distinguished into good and bad. The first has been defined to be a conscience, the judgments of which are conformable to the standard of duty, and which approves of our conduct. The epithet, however, is sometimes used, not to express the conformity of its judgments to the standard, but simply its approbation. In this sense, although a man should be in an error, he has a good conscience when he has acted according to his ideas of duty. It is probable that Paul affixed this meaning to the term, when he said to the Jewish Council, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day,"* for his words seem to refer to his whole past life; and in that part of it which preceded his conversion, he could be said to have had a good conscience, only because he was then sincere, and faithfully obeyed its dictates, however erroneous. By a bad conscience is sometimes meant a conscience which judges falsely, pronouncing sin to be duty and duty to be sin, and which consequently absolves when it should condemn, and condemns when it should absolve. But at present a bad conscience signifies an accusing conscience, and it is called bad, not because its judgments are erroneous, but because it torments the sinner, and inflicts upon him the agonies of remorse. Such a conscience disquiets a man in the midst of profound external peace; it makes him tremble when there is no visible danger; it covers him with shame by his own reflections, although to all around him his guilt is unknown. A look, which perhaps means nothing, but which he interprets as significant, quells his confidence; he is discomposed by an accidental word, which seems to glance at his secret crimes. Conscience has made many cowards.

I now proceed to speak of peace of conscience. I begin with observing, that there is a state of mind which resembles it, but ought not to be confounded with it, because it is totally different in its nature and its consequences. I mean a state of security, which excludes fear and disquietude, and may therefore be called peace, but differs from the peace which I am about to consider, as it rests upon no solid foundation, and is the effect, not of religion, but of confirmed habits of sin, and misconceptions of the character of God.

In some cases it is the effect of atheistical principles, or of principles which are equivalent to atheism. If a man has persuaded himself that there is no God, or that the Being whom we call God pays no regard to the actions of his creatures; that the soul is mortal as well as the body; and that there is no state of retribution beyond the grave; it is easy to see that this man will be exempt from the apprehensions which agitate other men, and will enjoy a kind of peace very different from the peace of religion.

Another cause of security is the power of sin, by which the voice of conscience has been silenced, and the mind fixed solely upon the business and the pleasures of the world, so that other subjects engage no share of its attention. The law of God and the future state, death and judgment, are entirely forgotten; or, if they should accidentally occur to the mind, they produce no effect, or an effect so slight, that it is instantly obliterated.

Sometimes security is the consequence of false ideas of the mercy of God; of a persuasion that he is so merciful, that he will not animadvert upon the failings of his creatures, and that, if they only pray to him now and then to forgive them, they shall undoubtedly be pardoned.

At other times, security arises from a false estimate of their own character; and this may take place in two different ways. Men may imagine that they have

* Ps. cxix. 128 † 1 Tim. iv. 2.

* Acts xxiii. 1.

fulfilled the demands of the law perfectly, or at least to such an extent as is necessary to their acceptance with God. Many a self-righteous man has lived and died without fear, in the flattering thought that he had made peace with his Maker by his obedience. Of this description was the Pharisee in the parable, who "Thanked God that he was not like other men." Again, men who profess to believe that we cannot be justified by works, may be secure, through the groundless persuasion that they are possessed of the faith by which an interest is obtained in the righteousness and salvation of Christ. They have faith, but it is dead while they suppose it to be living. Hence they conclude that they are in favour with God, and have nothing to fear from the dreadful threatenings denounced against sinners.

From these causes, a great part of mankind pass their time in complete apathy, or experience only occasional misgivings of mind.

Is there no such thing as true peace of conscience? Yes; it a precious blessing which God bestows upon his people, and which flows from the privileges formerly considered. There is a peace which Jesus Christ has bequeathed as an invaluable legacy to his disciples; there is a peace with which the God of peace "fills them in believing;"* there is a peace which "passes all understanding, and keeps their minds and hearts through Jesus Christ;"† there is a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. It consists in an assurance that God is no longer angry with them; that he will not reckon with them for their sins; that he has freely pardoned them; that he has received them into favour; that he will protect and bless them, and give them eternal rest in the world to come. None can estimate the value of this blessing but those who enjoy it. It is a continual feast; it is the joy and sunshine of the soul. Although we could claim the whole world as our heritage; although its crowns of glory were ours, and its delights crowded around to minister to our wishes, without this peace we should be miserable; but it is the solace of the soul, amidst the external evils which are so much dreaded, poverty, affliction, persecution, and contempt. To him who enjoys this privilege, we may justly apply the vain boast of the poet concerning his just man, that the rage of the multitude, the threatenings of tyrants, the commotions of the elements, the fall of the world itself, could not dismay him. *Impavidum ferient ruinæ.*‡ With an approving conscience, and God as his friend, what has he to fear?

Peace of conscience is founded upon peace with God. Now, peace with God is inseparably connected with the blessings of justification and adoption, which, in one point of view, may be considered as the same privilege under different aspects. As we are naturally enemies to God, so he is an enemy to us, for "he is angry with the wicked every day." A reconciliation, therefore, is necessary, and it has been effected by the atonement of Christ. When the pardon of sin, and restoration to the Divine favour, which are offered in the Gospel, are humbly and thankfully received by the sinner; when he draws near to God through Jesus Christ, confessing his guilt and unworthiness, and imploring his mercy; the reconciliation of which the foundation was laid by the blood of the cross, is completed. God enters into covenant with the sinner, and assures him that "he will be no more wroth with him, nor rebuke him."

When this important fact is known to the believer, peace of mind ensues. Who shall lay any thing to his charge? Justice is appeased; the demands of the law are satisfied; God has forgiven him, and conscience has therefore no accusation to bring. The memory of his past sins is not obliterated, and when he thinks of them, he is overwhelmed with shame and sorrow; but the reflection does not alarm him. He has nothing to fear. Conscience summoned him to the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge; but there he was acquitted, and it is henceforth silent. The believer obtains this peace by the contemplation of the mercy of God, of the all-sufficient merit and prevalent intercession of Christ, and of the promises confirmed with an oath; in all which, he sees an inviolable security that he shall not "come into condemnation." He obtains it by the assistance of the Spirit, "bearing witness with his spirit that he is a son of God," forming in him the characters by which the members of the heavenly family are distinguished.

This leads me to remark, that peace of conscience is also connected with the privilege of sanctification. Although God has fully pardoned believers, and will never cast them off, yet he sometimes suspends the sense of his favour, for the chastisement of their sins. In such cases they are disquieted and distressed, as we learn from the history of the saints, David and Asaph, and Heman, who says, "While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted."* Their guilt, which was cancelled, presents itself again; and, having lost for a time an assurance of the love of God, they experience their former fears. Hence, it appears that their peace will bear a proportion to their diligence and success in the cultivation of holiness. I do not mean that any of their good works are so perfect that conscience will find nothing to accuse; but that the more believers abound in them, the evidence will be clearer of the sincerity of their faith, and God will testify his approbation of them by manifestations of his love. This is obviously imported in the following exhortation: "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."† The apostle John teaches the same doctrine in several passages of his first Epistle, and particularly in the following words: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not,"—that is, if it bear testimony to the sincerity of our love and obedience,—"then have we confidence toward God."‡ Paul points out the connexion between holiness and peace of mind, when he says, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."‖

Peace of conscience flows from peace with God. It is maintained by faith in Christ, whose blood will cleanse us from our daily sins, and by a careful study to please God in doing his will. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them."§ This is the reward which God bestows at present upon the righteous. They find that there is profit in serving him. The heavenly calm within is a more precious recompense than outward prosperity, which smiles deceitfully, and is often followed by a storm. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."¶

From what has been now said, it appears that religion is not that gloomy anxious service which it is frequently conceived to be. If it imposes restraints and demands sacrifices, it compensates these by the happy state of mind which it excites. In order more

* Rom. xv. 13. † Phil. iv. 7.
‡ Horat. Carm. iii. 3. Fearless, in universal ruin.

* Ps. lxxxviii. 15. † 2 Cor. xiii. 11. ‡ 1 John iii. 18—21.
‖ 2 Cor. i. 12. § Ps. cxix. 165. ¶ Is. xxxii. 17.

fully to illustrate this point, I proceed to speak of spiritual joy, which is another native consequence of the privileges which have been considered. The Scriptures make frequent mention of it; and it is represented as distinct from peace, although closely connected with it. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement," or reconciliation.*

Joy is that delighted, elevated state of mind, which arises from the possession of present, and the anticipation of future good. Both these causes contribute to the joy of Christians.

First, They have an interest in Christ, to whom they are united by faith, as the branches are united to the vine, and the members of the body to the head. He is the source of their privileges and hopes, and hence they are sometimes represented as rejoicing in him alone. "Whom having not seen, ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."† The state into which they have been admitted by divine grace, is safe and honourable, for they are justified by the sentence of the Supreme Judge, and sanctified by the Spirit of holiness; but they are men compassed with infirmities, carrying about with them the remains of depravity, often falling into sin, and chargeable with defects in all their duties. It seems impossible, therefore, that their minds should be tranquil and cheerful, because conscience, which in them is faithful and tender, must cause disquiet by its accusations and remonstrances. And certainly their peace would be liable to perpetual disturbance, and their joy would soon give place to sorrow, if its continuance depended upon themselves. It is their connexion with Jesus Christ, which realizes what might otherwise be pronounced to be impracticable, and accounts for what at first view appears utterly incredible,—that they who are daily offending may yet daily rejoice. The view of his atonement, as we formerly remarked, brings relief to their minds, and for the sake of their Redeemer, God continues to behold them with a pleasant countenance. No interruption takes place of the friendly intercourse between him and them; and it is maintained with ineffable kindness on his part, and with the highest delight upon theirs. When they sin, their Advocate appears for them before the throne of heaven, and pleading his own merits in their behalf, preserves the reconciliation unbroken. Looking to themselves, they find innumerable causes of fear and despondency; but looking to him, they perceive solid grounds of confidence and joy. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."‡

Secondly, Another source of the joy of believers is the relation in which God stands to them. Upon his favour the happiness of intelligent creatures obviously depends. God is the most glorious Being in the universe, in whom every possible perfection resides, all that is great and fair is assembled. The contemplation of his character, therefore, as exhibited in the Gospel, in which condescension is associated with majesty, grace to the unworthy with unspotted purity and inflexible justice;—the contemplation of a character so amiable and so august, which displays the harmony of qualities which seemed to be forever opposed, looking with a benignant aspect upon man, is calculated to awaken high emotions of admiration and delight. Accordingly, we find the saints earnestly requesting a manifestation of it, in preference to all the splendid shows and bewitching pleasures of the world. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."* How transporting the thought to believers, that this glorious Being is their own by a peculiar and intimate relation; is not only the object of their worship and love, but the inexhaustible and everlasting source of their felicity! "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him."† There they possess all that their hearts can desire, and more than tongue can express. "They are satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and their mouths praise him with joyful lips."‡ There is no good thing which they may despair of obtaining; for the riches of his goodness are pledged to supply their wants, and the fulness of heaven itself is but a part of what he is able to bestow. Are they in solitude, forsaken by the world and by their friends? God is always near, to cheer their lonely hours with sweeter enjoyments than those of friendship and love. Do the afflictions of the present life come upon them? While they are assured that these shall not separate them from his love, they can trace the footsteps of their Father in the darkness and the tempest, and discern wisdom and goodness in apparent disorder and severity; they kiss the rod which is wielded by his gracious hand, and welcome the stripes which promote the health of their souls. As soon as a man can look upon the God of salvation as his own, and this is the privilege of those who have been admitted into a state of grace—the scenery around assumes a new aspect, and displays charms which never before met the eye. He beholds every where objects of pleasing admiration, and causes of heart-melting gratitude. Nature shines with the glory of its Maker. Mercies acquire a sweeter relish; afflictions lose half their bitterness; life rises in value, as the gift of love for purposes of infinite importance; death is divested of its terrors; the present is the seed-time of grace, and the future is the harvest of glory. In short, he enjoys God in every thing, and every thing in God.

A third source of joy to believers, who have been reconciled to God by the death of his Son, is the inhabitation of the Spirit of grace. I must not stop to prove that the Holy Ghost dwells in their souls, but shall assume a truth acknowledged by all who are worthy to be called Christians, and illustrated in the preceding part of this Course, when we were treating of regeneration, and sanctification. It is of importance to consider the character in which he is present with believers, or the office which he is appointed to perform. As a Divine Person, he inhabits the temple of the universe, and heaven and earth are sustained, and beautified, and enlivened by his influence; but he selects the souls of believers as the scene of his gracious operations. There he is present as the Spirit of truth and consolation; and it is his office to diffuse the cheering and tranquilizing light of heaven; to shed a divine serenity over the thoughts and feelings; to inspire and strengthen good principles; to elevate the affections above secular objects; to give a taste of the sweetness of spiritual things; to awaken hope, with all its blissful anticipations. To what can he be so fitly compared, as "to a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life?"‖ It is our Saviour's own similitude, and is alike worthy of notice for its expressiveness and its beauty. Like a fountain which is in perpetual motion, and pours out its stream in summer and in winter, he exerts his gracious power in youth, in manhood, and in old age, to promote the growth of grace, and to give them a foretaste of celestial bliss. The joy of the Christian is therefore not only pure, but permanent. No man can take it from

* Rom. v. 11. ‡1 Pet. i. 8. ‡1 John i. 7.

* Ps. xxvii. 4. †Lam. iii. 24. ‡Ps. lxiii. 5. ‖John iv. 14.

him. He is satisfied from himself; not from his own virtue and the resources of his own mind, as the old philosophers were wont vainly and presumptuously to boast; but from the communications of this Divine inmate in his bosom, whose presence is life, and whose favour is the sunshine of the soul. *Omnia mea mecum porto*,* said one of the self-sufficient wise men of antiquity; but it was a poor stock, and he must have starved upon it without the assistance of pride. The Christian who has the Holy Ghost dwelling in his heart, can say with truth that he "carries all his treasures with him;" for whithersoever he goes, and in whatever situation he is placed, his joy remains, and is full. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."†

In connexion with this particular, I may mention, in the fourth place, the doctrines and promises of the word of God, as a source of spiritual joy; for although the operations of the Spirit are distinct from these, they are always carried on in concurrence with them. It is by his application of them to their hearts that Christians are filled with joy and peace in believing. It is from the word of God that they learn the nature and extent of the privileges which the mediation of Christ has procured for them, and the securities that they shall hold them in perpetual succession. Hence we can account for the high value which they set upon it, the interest with which they peruse its contents, and the inexpressible satisfaction which, according to their own testimony, it imparts to their minds. "More to be desired are thy testimonies than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb."‡ Let us attend to its influence in communicating joy to them in the season of affliction. Pain is as uneasy to them as to other men; they feel disappointments as severely and are equally apt to despond and to sink under the burden of calamity. On such occasions the efficacy of the word of God is experienced. It enables believers to adopt that consoling train of reasoning which Paul pursues, in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and to infer from the death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ, not only their present justification before God, but their uninterrupted interest in his love. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or persecution, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."‖ Thus the word of God illuminates the darkest events; and faith, relying upon its assurances, keeps alive hope in circumstances which seem to justify despair, and turns the complaints and wailings of nature into songs of salvation. The people of God can rejoice in tribulation, because they know that it is sent with a benevolent design, and that it will terminate in their present and eternal good. With the staff of the promises in their hands, they fear no evil when they are pursuing their lonely journey in the valley and shadow of death. Providence sometimes speaks the language of wrath; but the word always speaks the language of love. Providence is sometimes like the stormy sky, in which neither sun nor star appears for many days; but the word is like the serene atmosphere of summer, illuminated by the solar rays, and showing on all sides agreeable objects. Hence it has been "the song of the saints in the house of their pilgrimage;" and we have their testimony, that "unless it had quickened them, they should have perished in their affliction."

The last source of spiritual joy which I shall mention, is hope, the influence of which we have all experienced. It exerts a sort of magic power, by which distant objects are brought near, and the future is made present, and we enjoy beforehand the good of which we cannot immediately obtain the actual possession. He whose bosom is animated by hope, is transported from the scene around him, to another fairer and more blissful; and, tasting its delights by anticipation, he is sometimes raised above the painful sense of his actual circumstances. If such is its effect when it is only an illusion of fancy, and at best its objects are confined to this diurnal sphere, what must be its power when it brings to bear upon the heart the surpassing glories of the world to come! The hope of the Christian conducts him by its light beyond the boundaries of time, and fixes his views and desires upon the realities of eternity. When his eye is steadily directed to heaven, and catches a glimpse of its scenes, of the magnificence of which no terrestrial splendour can furnish even a faint image, how light must the evils of life appear, and how diminutive its pleasures! We do not wonder to hear that believers rejoice, when it is added, "that they rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" a hope sufficient to warm the coldest heart, and to elevate the most depressed. This hope is founded on the righteousness of Christ, which was imputed to them when they believed. It is cherished by the Spirit of adoption, sent forth into their hearts as the earnest of the future inheritance; and it is strengthened by their progress in holiness, from which it appears that they are destined to possess that inheritance, and are now in a train of preparation for it. And hence we see to what cause it is owing that they are reconciled to a very hard lot in this world, and are content and happy in circumstances which would overwhelm others with dejection. Their minds are busy in making comparisons, not between their own condition and that of others who are more prosperous,—for such comparisons are the food and the fuel of discontent,—but between their present and their future state, between what they now suffer and what they shall hereafter enjoy. Thus the Christian is elevated in a great measure above the influence of temporal things. They affect him but little when his faith and hope are strong. If they are disagreeable, they are of short duration; and his prospects are so consoling and interesting, that he has neither leisure nor inclination to give himself much concern about his temporary accommodation. He who is hastening to take possession of a kingdom, will not be made unhappy by being uncomfortably lodged for a single night on the road. "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

Such are the sources of the joy of believers in Christ. We see on what grounds the Scripture pronounces them to be blessed, and can enter into the spirit of the song of praise and thanksgiving which is sung by the church: "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."†

Let not the doctrine concerning the joy which flows from faith be misunderstood. It is not meant to assert, that those who have been justified, and adopted into the family of God, always feel transports and

* I carry all my treasures with me. † Rom. xiv. 17.
‡ Ps. xix. 10. ‖ Rom. viii. 35—39.

* Rom. viii. 18. † Isa. xii. 1—3.

ecstacies. No such thing is implied, even in the exhortation to "rejoice ever more;"* nor would a state of perpetual rapture be consistent with their present condition, and their business in this world. If, in some happy moments, they are elevated to the mount of God, and, holding fellowship with him, lose the remembrance of sublunary things, they must again descend into the plain, and walk with men in the ordinary duties of life. For these, I think, they would be disqualified, were their minds powerfully affected at all times by bright visions of the glory of God and of heaven, and by such an overpowering sense of his love as the saints have sometimes experienced. The lively foretaste of future felicity is only occasional; and, in the usual train of life, they can expect nothing more than that tranquillity of mind, that placid frame, that calm cheerfulness and sober joy, which flow from the faith and hope of the Gospel. These may be compared to their daily food; but the former are delicacies and cordials, by which their exhausted strength is restored, and the injuries which sorrow has inflicted are repaired.

Still less should it be supposed, that Christians experience joy without interruption, because the sources of it are unfailing. Their state is always safe, but their feelings are not always comfortable. It is certain, however, that, if their joy suffers interruptions, and they live in fear, perplexity, and dejection, the fault is their own. They must co-operate with God, both by avoiding whatever would counteract his gracious designs, and by a diligent use of the means appointed to give them effect.

They must live by faith, for their peace and joy will be in proportion to it. A man would not be delighted by the most beautiful objects in nature which he did not see, nor relieved from the apprehension of want by great riches which he did not know himself to possess: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." When Paul triumphed in affliction, it was through faith: "I am *persuaded* that nothing shall separate us from the love of God."† When Asaph was dejected, unbelief was the cause: "I said, this is mine infirmity."‡

They must beware of "forsaking the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to themselves broken cisterns which can hold no water." In other words, they must beware of setting their affections upon any other than God, and of seeking happiness from any inferior source. It is their folly in doing so which is the cause of all their disquietudes. If we hold up a dark body between us and the sun, must we not be in the shade? How can they rejoice who, with their own hands, shut out joy from their souls? If we wish God to remain in his temple, and to fill it with his glory, we must not permit any rival to usurp his place, nor erect an altar for unhallowed sacrifices. When sin in any form is indulged, the most fatal consequences ensue; as we learn from the earnest prayer of David, after God had been provoked to withdraw a sense of his love, and was testifying his displeasure against him: "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit."‖

Once more, They must be diligent, zealous, and constant in obedience, for thus the soul is maintained in a healthy vigorous state, and is capable of receiving and relishing spiritual joy; whereas by remissness, it becomes relaxed and languid. It is not to be expected that God will smile upon his disobedient children; but, to the dutiful, he will give unequivocal proofs of his approbation: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways."* Christians have always found, that when they walked with God in the exercise of faith, and the practical study of holiness, they were visited with the light of his countenance; but that darkness and distress were the never-failing consequences of the omission and careless performance of their duty.

Such are the methods by which Christians will secure to themselves the happiness which God has provided for them: "If they do these things, they shall never fall."† Life will flow on in the pure tranquil pleasures of religion; and their death will come to fill up the measure of their bliss in the heavenly world, where there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain, because the former things shall have passed away.

*1 Thes. v. 16. †Rom. viii. 38. ‡Ps. lxxvii. 10. ‖Ps. li. 3, 11, 12.

LECTURE LXXIX.

ON THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

Different opinions respecting the Perseverance of the Saints.—Their total or final fall impossible.—Their perseverance inferred from the Immutable Decree and the Covenant of God, the Mediation of Christ, and the Indwelling and Offices of the Spirit.—Examination of the Passages of Scripture alleged against this Doctrine.

We have seen, that sinners are brought into a state of favour with God through faith in Jesus Christ; and that the Holy Spirit is given to them, by whom they are sanctified, that they may serve God in this world, and may be qualified for being admitted into his immediate presence in the next. The happiness which they enjoy in consequence of these privileges is great. At peace with their Maker, they have peace in their own minds, and look forward to the future state with the anticipations of hope. There is only one thing wanting to complete their happiness, so far as it can be perfect in the present life; and that is, the certain knowledge that their present state is stable and immutable. And that those anticipations will be realized. If their interest in the salvation of Christ is secured beyond the possibility of change, they may, with the Apostle, triumphantly bid defiance to all the powers of earth and hell; if, however, they may fall from a state of grace, there is not only a call for vigilance, but ground of anxiety, and their prospect will often be darkened by fearful forebodings. The question, therefore, respecting the perseverance of the saints, is not a mere speculation, but is intimately connected with their peace and consolation; and, according as it is decided, will have a powerful influence in rendering their religion cheerful or gloomy.

Upon this subject, professed Christians are divided in sentiment, as indeed they are upon almost every article of faith. The doctrine of our Church, in which, I believe, all the Reformed Churches concurred, is expressed in the following words: "They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved."‡ The Church of England, which has a Calvinistic creed, although, as the great Lord Chatham said, her liturgy is Popish, and her clergy, many of them at least, are Arminian, teaches us the same doctrine in the seventeenth article: "They which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God," namely election, "be called according to God's purpose, by his spirit working in due season; they through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they

*Is. lxiv. 5. †2 Pet. i. 10. ‡Conf. chap. xvii. § i.

be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity."

It is well known to you all, I presume, that the followers of Arminius maintained a very different doctrine, and that this is one of the articles by which their creed is distinguished from that of the followers of Calvin. Their sentiments are thus expressed by themselves: "True believers may apostatize from the true faith, and fall into such sins as are inconsistent with true and justifying faith; nay, it is not only possible for them to do so, but it frequently comes to pass. True believers may by their own fault become guilty of great and abominable crimes, and may continue and die in the same, and consequently may finally fall into perdition."* After this authoritative statement, it may be deemed superfluous to subjoin the sentiments of an individual, but I shall quote the words of Limborch, their celebrated Professor of Theology: "We maintain that, notwithstanding divine grace, by which a believer may persevere in faith, there remains in man a power of falling away, and, therefore, that a believer may totally lose his faith and regeneration, and may continue in apostasy to the end of his life, and so eternally perish."† The Remonstrants are supported in this article of their creed by Papists, for the Council of Trent has decreed that "if any person shall say that a man who has been justified, cannot lose grace, and that therefore he who falls and sins was never truly justified, he shall be accursed."‡

It is granted that believers, under the influence of temptation, may commit great sins, which are highly offensive to men and provoking to God. We have two remarkable examples in Scripture. The first is David, who seduced the wife of his neighbour, and then devised the murder of her husband. The atrocity of both actions is manifest; but the latter implied deeper guilt on several accounts, and particularly because it was the result of deliberation and contrivance; and being posterior to the other, it showed that he continued for a considerable time in a state of moral insensibility. The second is Peter, who denied his Lord, and whose crime was aggravated, because it was committed although he had been forewarned; because it was repeated a second and a third time; and because it was accompanied with oaths and imprecations, in themselves profane, and which changed his false affirmation into perjury. There is no doubt, that other saints have been guilty of the same sins, or of others equally heinous. It is not to be supposed, indeed, that such cases are of frequent occurrence, because then there would be no visible difference between those who have, and those who want the grace of God. There would then be no answer to the prayer of our Saviour for the former, that his Father would keep them from the evil of the world; and to their own prayer, that he would keep them back from presumptuous sins, and not suffer them to have dominion over them. Believers, living by faith in the Son of God from whom their strength is derived, and diligently using the appointed means, are enabled to walk in holiness and righteousness, and to be blameless, and harmless, and without rebuke. But as such cases do sometimes occur, the adversaries of the doctrine of perseverance eagerly lay hold of them as an argument against it. How could those persons, continuing saints, have acted such a part? Where was their faith, when they denied the Lord that bought them? Where was their love to God, when in the most daring manner they trampled on his law? Concerning these two examples, I would remark, before I proceed to the general argument, that, strong as they seem, they are by no means conclusive against the doctrine which I mean to establish. Great as appears to have been the insensibility of David till he was awakened by the reproof of Nathan, we cannot consider him as having totally lost all religious principle. The seed was in the ground although it gave no signs of vegetation. This may be inferred from his prayer: "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me;"* in which it is implied, that the Spirit had not utterly withdrawn from him, although it was a punishment which he deserved and earnestly deprecated. The same remark may be made upon Peter; in whom we are assured by the prayer of our Saviour for him, that faith remained even at the time when he had renounced it in words. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."† Observe the particularity of this prayer. All the disciples were to be exposed to temptation, and no doubt our Lord interceded for them all; but he speaks of Peter alone, because he was to fall more foully than his brethren; and if the prayer was answered, his faith did not utterly fail.

We assert, then, that true believers cannot fall totally or finally from grace. It may seem that the use of both these words is unnecessary, because if they cannot fall totally, it follows that they cannot fall finally; but they are intended to oppose the doctrine of Arminians, who affirm, that although a saint may fall totally from grace, he may be restored by repentance; but that since this is uncertain, and does not always take place, he may also fall finally, and die in his sins. Now, we affirm, that the total apostasy of believers, is impossible, not in the nature of things, but by the divine constitution; and consequently, that no man who has been once received into the divine favour can be ultimately deprived of salvation.

The doctrine of our church respecting the perseverance of the saints, is supported by a variety of arguments.

First, it is proved from the decree of God concerning them, which was formerly shewn to be immutable. They were predestinated to life, and shall infallibly obtain it, if the purposes of God are not changeable like those of men, and liable to be frustrated by opposition which he did not foresee and could not prevent. But the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his will;" and the design of the economy of providence and grace is to carry his purposes into effect. Accordingly, the Scriptures exhibit a chain of events stretching from eternity to eternity, not one of the links of which can be broken. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."‡ Predestination and eternal glory are connected by the intermediate links of vocation and justification; each follows the other in regular succession; the second is as certain as the first, the third as the second, and the fourth as the third; they are all expressed in the past time, probably to signify that, although the last is future, it is as certain as if it had already taken place. Those who deny the perseverance of the saints break this chain, and affirm that the decree of predestination may prove abortive, that our calling may be made void, and that the sentence of pardon pronounced upon a believer may be revoked. But how contrary is this doctrine to the general tenor of Scripture, which proclaims the security of believers, and calls upon them to rejoice in hope of the glory of God! How contrary to these

* Confession of Remonstrants, as quoted in Brandt's History of the Reformation in the Low Countries, vol. iii. p. 89.
† Limborch. Theol. Lib. v. cap. lxxx.
‡ Decret. De Justificatione. canon xxiii.

* Ps. li. 11. † Luke xxii. 31. ‡ Rom. viii. 30.

words of our Lord! "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."* To say that the words, "if it were possible," imply only the great difficulty of the thing, because the same phrase is used in some cases when an absolute impossibility cannot be understood, is to wrest them from their natural meaning to serve a particular purpose. Our Saviour foretells a time of trial in which none should escape except the elect; but this interpretation makes him say that many should be seduced, and perhaps the elect too, but with greater difficulty. And for what purpose did he say so? It was not surely to encourage his disciples, for this view of the matter would give them no consolation, as the difficulty might be overcome, and they also might apostatize. And how does this comment agree with his own words in a preceding verse? "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened;" or with his words in the parallel passage in Luke, "But there shall not a hair of your head perish."† Why all this care of the elect, expressed by shortening the days, if still they might be deceived? And why so solemnly assure them of their preservation from bodily harm, if still they were in danger of losing their souls? Taking all the passages together, we confidently conclude, that the words under consideration import not merely a difficulty, but an absolute impossibility. And whence this impossibility arose, we are informed by another sacred writer, who tells us that the saints "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."‡

The next argument is taken from the nature of the covenant which God has made with his people. It is not transitory, like the first covenant, but is everlasting; and hence its blessings are promised, not for a time, but forever.—"And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."‖ There are two engagements in this single promise, both which God has pledged himself to fulfil. He promises not to turn away from his people to do them good; and he promises to put his fear in their hearts, that they may not depart from him. The second engagement is necessary to the fulfilment of the first. Were they to depart from God, to break off all connexion with him, and to return to the service of Satan, he could not continue to do them good, consistently with the holiness of his character; but he will preserve them in such a state that he may hold fellowship with them, without any impeachment of his honour. Let it not, in defiance of the promise itself, which makes no mention of any condition, be said that the promise is conditional; and that it is only understood that God will continue to be gracious to them, if they continue to fear him, which, however, they may cease to do. It is true, indeed, that they are fallible and changeable; but the danger to be apprehended from this quarter is effectually guarded against; for, in the new covenant, the perseverance of the saints is secured by the provision of the means. God has pledged himself to put his fear in their hearts, or to grant to them such communications of his grace as shall preserve them from falling away. To the same purport are the following words of our Saviour: "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."§ We shall more fully understand the import of these words, if we compare them with the preceding verse: "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Both taken together, contain a solemn assurance that the sheep of Christ, or those who hear his voice, and know and follow him, shall be eternally saved. Yes, say our adversaries; none can pluck them out of the hand of God, and they shall not perish through any want of power on his part; but they may withdraw themselves from his hand by their own voluntary act. Let us see, then, what is the sense of the words upon this supposition. Our Lord solemnly assures his followers, that no created power shall wrest them out of his hand, or that of his Father. It is quite evident that physical force is here out of the question, and that it could never enter into the mind of any man in his senses, that this could have any success in a struggle with Omnipotence. It is a moral power of which he must be understood to speak; by which, I mean the power of arguments, and promises, and threatenings, to induce them to apostatize from the faith. What then does he tell his disciples? He tells them, that neither man nor devil should succeed in tempting them to apostasy, unless they gave their consent; a piece of information not new nor necessary, as all his disciples, and every person of common sense, knew it before; for it is as clear as sunshine, that temptation will do us no harm, if we do not comply with it. This silly truism, it seems, is the amount of our Lord's solemn declaration, twice delivered, concerning the safety of believers. No person can draw them into apostasy unless they yield to seduction. With such downright nonsense, as we might call it did it not deserve to be branded as an impious perversion of Scripture, is the hypothesis of Arminians supported; and an attempt is made to wrest from the people of God one of the best sources of their consolation. By the same miserable expedient, they endeavour to evade the evidence of other declarations and promises which teach the perseverance of the saints. There is implied in them this condition,—that they shall obtain eternal salvation, if they are not wanting to themselves; or, in other words, the Scriptures tell us that the saints arrive at the end of their journey, if they continue to walk in the way, and do not turn aside into a by-path.

The Apostle Paul plainly teaches the perseverance of the saints, when he asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" and goes on to shew, that no change or trouble which may befal them can effect a separation: "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us."* To this subject we may also apply the following passage: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."†

I shall now lay before you some other arguments for the perseverance of the saints, which are founded on the mediation of Christ.

The first argument is, that those for whom he laid down his life shall certainly be saved, because he has paid the full price of their redemption.—Some, indeed, tell us that the design of his death was merely to render God placable, that thus there might be no obstacle to the restoration of sinners to his favour if they should comply with the terms, and to their final salvation if they should continue faithful and obedient to the end of their lives. It is evident that the perseverance of the saints has no necessary connexion with the hy-

* Matth. xxiv. 24. † Matth. xxiv. 22. Luke xxi. 18.
‡ 1 Pet. i. 5. ‖ Jer. xxxii. 40. § John x. 29.

* Rom. viii. 35, 37. † Is. liv. 9, 10.

pothesis. When God was rendered placable, the design of our Saviour's death was fully accomplished, although not one individual of the human race had been actually reconciled to him. But the hypothesis is false. God was placable without any respect to the death of his Son: and of this he has assured us, by declaring that he freely loved the world, and that the mission of his Son was the consequence of this love. It amounts to the same thing to say, as others do, that Christ died for all men, or, that his death so pleased God that he has established a dispensation of grace, by which all men have an opportunity of obtaining salvation. According to this scheme, nothing is fixed with respect to individuals, and the final perdition of those who once believed does not interfere with its arrangements. The view which the Scriptures give of the design of the death of Christ is totally different. They inform us that it was a sacrifice of atonement offered for us; that our "iniquities were laid upon him," and "he bore them in his own body on the tree;" and they plainly teach the doctrine of substitution. Now, as a surety stands in the room of the person whom he represents, the latter reaps all the benefit of what the surety has done in his name; so that, if his debt has been paid by the surety, the creditor cannot demand the payment of it from him. Let us apply this illustration to the subject before us. If Christ made satisfaction on the Cross for the sins of his people, not for some of them only, but for them all, as we are expressly assured, it would be contrary to justice to subject them also, to the punishment. But, if the saints may fall from a state of grace, and perish in their sins, satisfaction will be twice exacted, first, from the surety, and secondly, from them. Either Christ did, or did not, make an atonement for the sins of his people. If he did not make an atonement for them, they must satisfy for themselves; if he did answer the demands of justice in their room, it is impossible that, under the righteous administration of Heaven, they should, by any cause, or for any reason, come into condemnation. Accordingly, the new covenant promises to believers complete and irrevocable pardon. I will "be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."* But if the doctrine of the defectibility of the saints is true, the promise is false, for their sins may be remembered again. Nay, if this doctrine is true, Christ might have died in vain; for as one saint may fall from a state of grace as well as another, it might happen that not a single sinner should be actually redeemed by his blood from everlasting destruction.

The next argument is founded on the intercession of Christ. Those in whose behalf he prays that they may be preserved from evil, and may finally be brought to the place where he is, shall certainly be saved, "for him the Father hears always." Such is his prayer for his followers: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." It is obviously false to say, that this is a prayer for his immediate disciples alone, for he himself has extended it to all believers: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."† It is a manifest evasion to say, that it is a prayer solely for their preservation from afflictions and temptations; because, in the first place, if this was his prayer, it has not been answered, as his disciples, in the beginning and in all subsequent ages, have been exposed to both; and because, in the second place, we know it to be his will that they should be exposed to them for their trial and improvement. And how absurd is it to suppose, that our Lord would pray that they might be kept from such things as might give them uneasiness, and might eventually lead them into sin, but neglected to pray that they might be kept from sin itself! It is still more daring to say, that the perseverance of the saints does not follow from this prayer, because his prayers have not always been answered. Thus, he prayed for his murderers, many of whom persisted in unbelief. But we should distinguish between the prayers of Christ as a man, and as a Mediator. As a man, he prayed, in obedience to the law of love, for his enemies, leaving it to God to deal with them according to his sovereign pleasure. We have no reason to think that he prayed on the cross as Mediator; or, if we should take this view of it, we may be certain that his prayer was answered in the case of all to whom it extended, by the conversion of thousands of the men who with wicked hands crucified and slew him. The prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John, was evidently offered up by him in the character of the High Priest and Intercessor of the church, who, for the sake of his people, had sanctified or dedicated himself to this office. Shall our Saviour intercede in vain? Shall any of those for whom he shed his blood fall away and perish, although he has requested that their faith should not fail? No; it is impossible. "Because I live," he said, "ye shall live also." "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."* He does not pray in the unmeaning strain of our adversaries: 'Keep them from evil, if they will keep themselves; bring them to glory, if they do not stop in the way.' He prays that Divine grace may be sufficient for them, and enable them to go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in the heavenly Zion.

Other arguments in support of the doctrine of perseverance are derived from the inhabitation of the Spirit. That the Holy Ghost is given to believers, is a truth so plainly taught, and so generally acknowledged, that it may at present be taken for granted. It is certain that men are in a state of grace only while they enjoy his presence, and that, if he should be taken away, they would return to a state of nature. To decide the question, therefore, respecting the perseverance of the saints, it is only necessary to ascertain whether he is a transient visitant, or a constant inmate in their souls. Let us hear, then, the words of our Lord to his disciples: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."† This is a virtual promise of the Spirit *in perpetuum*, and, consequently, an assurance to the disciples that they should be guided, and assisted, and protected by him, to the end of their lives. Here, then, is one instance, in which the perseverance of some saints was secured by supernatural grace. But perhaps our adversaries will say, that this promise respected the disciples only in their official character, and implied nothing more than that they should always enjoy the assistance of the Spirit in their apostolical labours. The whole context shows that such an interpretation is totally unfounded; but that every ground of doubt with respect to the constant inhabitation of the Spirit in believers may be removed, let me quote another passage against which the plea of particular or exclusive application cannot be alleged: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."‡ We know from other places that this water signifies the Spirit. Now, observe that he who drinks of this water shall never thirst. It is a poor, pitiful commentary on the words to say, that he shall not thirst while he is drinking, but that if he gives over using this water he shall thirst again; for this was true

* Heb. viii: 12. † John xvii. 11, 15, 20.

* John xiv. 19. Rom. viii. 34. † John xiv. 16. ‡ Ib. iv. 14.

of the water of Jacob's well, as well as of this living water which is contrasted with it, and preferred to it. It is plainly meant that he shall never thirst, because he shall have an unfailing supply; and accordingly it is added, that "this water shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The water shall never cease, or the Spirit shall never be withdrawn, but shall continue with those to whom he has been given till the work of their salvation is completed. I do not conceive it to be possible to express more explicitly the perseverance of the saints. If the Holy Spirit shall never be taken from them, then they shall never fall from a state of grace.

There are two offices assigned to the Spirit, from which we may draw the same conclusion. He is sent to seal believers, and to be the earnest of the future inheritance. They are both mentioned in the following passage: "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."* A seal was used for different purposes;—to mark a person's property, to secure his treasures, or to authenticate a deed. In the first sense, the Spirit distinguishes believers as the peculiar people of God; in the second, he guards them as his precious jewels; in the third, he confirms or ratifies their title to salvation. And can we suppose that this work of the Spirit may be counteracted, and rendered of no effect; that those whom he has separated to God may be again confounded with the mass of sinners; that the treasures over which he watches may be scattered and lost; and that the title of the saints, although authenticated by his signature, may be reversed? With the gift of the Spirit for the purpose of sealing, the Apostle connects the idea of establishment; but according to the hypothesis of our adversaries, they are not connected, and he who has been sealed may stumble and fall. We know, however, whom it will be our wisdom to believe.—Again, the Spirit is represented as "an earnest." An earnest is a part given as a security for the future possession of the whole. The Holy Ghost is the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, because he begins that holiness in the soul which will be perfected in heaven, and imparts those joys which are foretastes of its blessedness. A work may be begun, but not finished, because the workman has desisted from a change of views, or has met with obstacles which made it impossible to proceed. Those with whom we contend are of opinion that, from the latter cause, the work of grace in the heart of man may be stopped, namely, from his waywardness and obstinacy. But if the workman has pledged himself to execute his plan, and is possessed of sufficient resources to fulfil his engagement, the work will go on, and in due time will be completed. Now, the design of representing the Spirit as an earnest, is manifestly to assure us that the work which he has begun in the soul of believers, he will "perform to the day of Jesus Christ." The designation given to him is an assurance that he will not desist. He could not be an earnest, if it might happen that those who had received him should not obtain the inheritance. To call him so in this case, would create false expectations. But, let God be true, and every man who contradicts him a liar. If he has granted his people the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts, he will not fail to bestow all the blessedness for which he has given them reason to hope. "If children, they are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with his Son Jesus Christ."†

Some of the arguments by which our opponents support their doctrine, have been occasionally mentioned. I shall now take notice of their reasoning from certain passages of Scripture.

The first argument is founded upon the following words in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."* Here it is supposed, they say, that a righteous man may fall from holiness, and perish in guilt. There is an answer to this argument, which they treat with contempt as a mere evasion, namely, that the person here mentioned is not a saint, but a man of a good moral character, and that the life and death spoken of in the passage are of a temporal nature. It is justified, however, by the context; and whoever examines it with attention will find, that nothing it said of him which may not be affirmed of many who have a form of godliness, but have not experienced its power; and that the prophet is describing the treatment of different characters in the course of God's providential government. We grant that such a man may fall from his righteousness; while at the same time, with perfect consistency, we affirm the perseverance of the saints. But there is another answer,—that this is a hypothetical statement, the design of which is to point out the connexion, under the Divine administration, between righteousness and happiness, and between unrighteousness and misery. We have a similar statement in another place, where an Apostle says to believers, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;"† although we know, from the principles of Paul, that he did not conceive it possible that a true saint should perish. The import of such statements is simply this, that if one thing happen another will follow. But they do not affirm the actual existence of either the one or the other. When a philosopher says, If a comet should impinge upon the earth, or come too near it, the earth would be shattered into pieces, or burnt up, or driven from its orbit,—he does not suppose or fear that his hypothetical case will be realized. What, then, it may be asked, is the use of such statements? I answer, that while they point out the necessity of continuance in holiness to the attainment of final salvation, they are a mean of exciting believers to watchfulness, and diligence, and prayer, and thus contribute to their perseverance in grace; for God deals with them as rational creatures, and works upon them by motives addressed to their hopes and their fears.

Another argument is founded on the parable of the sower: "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."‡ It is not a little surprising, that this passage should be quoted by our opponents in support of their doctrine. It speaks evidently of a man who receives the word of God and continues for a time, and then falls away; and thus far it is quite to their purpose. But unhappily for them, our Saviour gives us the reason of failure, that he has no root in himself; plainly implying that, if he had had root in himself, he would have withstood every temptation. The passage, instead of militating against our doctrine, plainly teaches the perseverance of the saints, by signifying that the cause why some do not persevere is, that they are not saints, or have not the grace of God in their hearts; for this is the only root which can preserve the plant from withering away. Our Lord distinguishes such hearers of the word from believers, when he describes the former as stony ground, and the latter as good ground. He thus points out an essential

* 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. † Rom. viii. 17.

* Ezek. xviii. 24. † Rom. viii. 13. ‡ Matth. xiii. 20, 21.

difference between them. They are not of the same species; and it is altogether illogical to conclude, that what may be affirmed of the one may also be affirmed of the other.

The next argument is deduced from these words in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away," or, "having fallen away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."* This passage is eagerly laid hold of by those who deny the perseverance of the saints, as decisive in their favour; for are not the persons described manifestly possessed of the characteristic qualifications of the saints, and yet it is supposed that they may irrecoverably apostatize? Let us examine the qualifications, and see whether they imply any thing which may not be found in the unregenerated. "They were once enlightened;" but so may all be said to be to whom the Gospel is preached, and who are acquainted with its doctrines. They have "received the knowledge of the truth," as the Apostle expresses himself in another part of this epistle; or, as Peter says, they have "known the way of righteousness."† In this manner, the unbelieving Jews were enlightened, and for this reason their sin was highly aggravated: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."‡—"They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost;" but so are all those who experience his common influences, by which they are impressed under the dispensation of the Gospel; and so were those in the primitive times who were endowed with miraculous powers, which were given to them by the Spirit. But that such persons were not all true believers, is evident from the words of our Lord to some of them: "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you."‖ He never acknowledged them as genuine disciples.—"They have tasted the good word of God;" so had the hearers in the parable of the sower, whose case we considered above, and concerning whom, it is plain that they never were possessed of saving faith, for they had no root in themselves. Concerning the other two particulars, "their partaking of the heavenly gift," and "tasting the powers of the world to come," I shall say nothing, because it is doubtful what they mean, and consequently no use can legitimately be made of them in this argument. A conjectural interpretation proves nothing. We may presume, however, from the connexion in which they appear, that they imply no higher qualifications than those which have been already considered. The passage supposes the apostasy of persons who had advanced as far, it may be, as unconverted men could advance, but were destitute of true grace, which never fails.

Another passage is in the second Epistle of Peter; but after what has been said, the solution must be so obvious, that it is unnecessary to point it out. It speaks of those who, through "the knowledge of Christ, have escaped the pollutions of the world," and "whose latter end is worse than their beginning."§ But, what were those but the temporary hearers of the Gospel of whom we have already spoken? It would require a long time, and much repetition, to follow our adversaries in their comments upon Scripture; and I shall therefore desist, as the specimen which has been given is sufficient.

They produce examples also in support of their system, as of David, Solomon, Hymeneus, Philetus, and Demas. Our answer is, that, with respect to such of them as were saints, we affirm that they might fall into great sins without losing the principle of grace; as Peter did, who retained faith, although he denied his Master; and with respect to the rest, their case has been already disposed of. The fall of mere professors of religion is nothing to the purpose.

A general argument is founded on the exhortations of Scripture, in which the saints are called to watch and labour, and work out their salvation with fear and trembling; in which exhortations it is implied, that the event is uncertain. It may be remarked that, being addressed to societies of Christians in which there was a mixture of believers and hypocrites, they were properly expressed in such a manner as to imply that the result was problematical. But, not to insist upon this answer, it ought to be considered, that the purpose of God does not supercede the use of means, nor is grace given to render our own exertions superfluous. God will certainly save those whom he has chosen, but he will save them by his word and ordinances, and by a diligent improvement of opportunities and privileges. If this is the instituted plan of effecting his purpose, exhortations and admonitions do not necessarily imply the uncertainty of the issue, but merely point out the manner and order in which the design will be accomplished. A man will not die before the appointed time, and yet there is no inconsistency in telling him, that unless he avoid dangers, and take food and medicine, he cannot live. His knowledge that upon such conditions life depends, leads him to use those precautions by which the number of his days is completed, and the Divine purpose respecting him is executed. Believers are not merely passive subjects of Divine grace, but God works in them and by them, and requires that they should do their part while he is doing his.

It is objected, that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is unfavourable to the interests of holiness. But how it can have this effect, it is not easy to perceive. It is perseverance in holiness which we maintain; or, in other words, we maintain that believers will persevere in holiness to the end; and it will require, I presume, more discernment than any of you possesses, to discover the tendency of this opinion to make men fall into sin. Our doctrine holds out no hope of final salvation to those who are living in sin. No man can have this hope unless he is walking in the way of God. It is another doctrine which is unfavourable to holiness, namely, that men shall be saved if they have once believed, although they live as they please. The objection has no relation to the genuine doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, and is altogether unworthy of notice.

LECTURE LXXX.

ON THE DEATH OF THE SAINTS, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Reason why Death befalls Believers.—Its effect upon them.—The Survivance of the Soul.—Its Immortality deduced from its Immateriality, the Nature of its Powers, the anticipations of Conscience, the present irregular distribution of Good and Evil, and from Universal Belief.

"He that endureth to the end shall be saved."* That every genuine believer shall thus endure, we have endeavoured to prove by a variety of arguments from Scripture; and are persuaded that although temporary professors of religion may apostatize, and the most flattering hopes may be disappointed, yet, wherever the work of grace has been begun, it will be

* Heb. vi. 4—6. † Heb. x. 26. 2 Pet. ii. 21.
‡ John xv. 22. ‖ Matth. vii. 23. § 2 Pet. ii. 20.

* Matth. x. 22.

carried on and completed. The salvation which is reserved for believers at the end of their course, comprehends the perfection and felicity of the whole man, of soul and body. I proceed to consider the subject in its several parts, and shall speak, in the first place, of the death of the saints and its consequences.

"It is appointed unto men once to die."* The sentence of death was pronounced upon Adam after the fall, and his posterity were included in it, because he was their federal head. Accordingly, "death has passed upon all men, because all have sinned;" and that it is not their personal sin which is the cause of their mortality, is evident from the fact of which the Scriptures take notice, that "death reigned from Adam to Moses," and we may add, reigns to this hour, "over them who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression;"† that is, over infants who are not capable of actual disobedience. Some affirm that death was natural to man, or that he was mortal by the constitution of his nature, and that it is therefore no proof of original guilt. But, besides that this objection has been already considered, and that there is no necessity to discuss it again, it is almost superfluous labour at any time to enter into an elaborate refutation of an opinion, which does not even possess the slightest degree of plausibility, as it directly contradicts the most explicit and solemn declarations of Scripture.

It cannot therefore excite surprise, that all men are subject to the law of mortality, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the young and the old. We are ignorant of the reasons for which some are cut off as soon as they see the light, while others arrive at extreme old age, and men fall at every period of life; but we are in no uncertainty with respect to the cause of the general doom. Death is the execution of the righteous sentence, appointing the sinful inhabitants of this earth to return to the dust from which they were taken. The guilty are brought forward according to the will of the Supreme Judge, to suffer in their order the penalty of the law. Melancholy as is the spectacle of a race of rational beings, wasted by disease, and swallowed up by the grave, we can account for it consistently with the goodness of the Creator, because their fate is not an arbitrary exercise of his power, but is demanded by his justice. He has no pleasure in the mere destruction of his creatures, and would neither effect it by his own agency, nor permit it to be effected by second causes, if it were not required by the law of his moral administration.

Thus far all is plain; but when we proceed to observe, that from the law of mortality even the righteous are not exempted, the question arises, how we shall account for the indiscriminate execution of the sentence? For the righteous an atonement has been made, by which their guilt was expiated; and consequently it might be presumed that they would be delivered from all the effects of the curse. How, then, comes it to pass that they are subject to death, which is acknowledged to be the penalty of sin?

Great as this difficulty may seem, it is not the only one which occurs in the history of the saints. It is not, indeed, a solution of one difficulty, to point out others connected with the subject of inquiry; but they suggest to us, that if notwithstanding these, we could quietly retain our belief, we should not allow it to be disturbed by an additional objection, which in itself is not more formidable. If we ask, why believers undergo temporal death, although Christ has atoned for their sins? may we not with equal reason ask, why they are not completely delivered from the pollution of sin as well as from its guilt, as soon as they believe? Why does it remain in them to taint their duties, and to impede their consolation? Why are they still exposed to the malignity of Satan? Why are they compelled to carry a heavy burden of affliction? These things are as inconsistent with our notions of the effect of a perfect expiation of sin, as their subjection to temporal death; for it would seem to us, that, as soon as the benefit of the atonement is applied to them, they should not only be restored to the favour of God, but completely relieved from every evil, physical and moral.

But this is not the only instance, in which our notions of what is just and fit are found not to accord with the Divine dispensations. It is certain that, if justice required, when an atonement had been made for sin, that the guilty should be fully pardoned, thus far its demands are satisfied. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;"* and consequently, we are sure that whatever may be the proceedings of Providence towards them, they are not to be considered as effects or indications of wrath. God, in stipulating with his Son the remission of those for whom he was to shed his blood, might make a reservation of some of the temporal consequences of sin, for reasons worthy of his wisdom. To these he might judge it expedient to subject them, but with a merciful design; and, with this exception, might promise to exempt them from the operation of the penalty, as a man may stipulate with the representative of another, with respect to the time and the degree in which the expected benefit shall be conferred.

The procedure of God towards the saint has been compared to the manner of proceeding under the ceremonial law, in reference to a house infected with leprosy. "The priest shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place."† In like manner God destroys the earthly house of our tabernacle, which is polluted with sin, and commands it to be carried to the grave. It has been remarked too, that under the ancient economy earthen vessels which had been defiled were broken, but those which were formed of a more solid or a more precious substance, were only washed with water, or purified by fire. Our souls are vessels of gold, and for this reason, although polluted, he does not destroy them, but he reduces our sinful bodies to dust. These, however, are merely illustrations, and I believe fanciful illustrations, of the fact, and they give us no assistance in discovering the reasons of it.

The death of the body is sometimes represented as necessary to the complete sanctification of the soul. To do so, however, is to commit the mistake of confounding the conjunction of two events with the relation of cause and effect. We acknowledge that the saints are not made perfect in holiness till they die; but although God has established a connexion between these two things, there is no reason to think that it is a necessary connexion. It does not follow, because he usually produces a certain effect in a particular way, that he could not produce it in a different way. What should hinder him from sanctifying believers wholly in the present life? You say, perhaps, that the present constitution of the body is an obstacle. It would not be easy, however, to explain this point satisfactorily or intelligibly; to show that, great as is the influence of the body upon the mind, almighty grace could not fully counteract it, so far as it is unfriendly to holiness. But, supposing that there is something in the present state of the body which renders perfect holiness unattainable, we may ask again, what should hinder God from now effecting such a change as would fit the body for co-operating with the soul in its purest exercises? That the separation of the soul from the body, and the dissolu-

* Heb. ix. 27. † Rom. v. 12, 14.

* Rom. viii. 1. † Lev. xiv. 45.

tion of the latter in the grave, are not necessary to the complete purification of the soul, is evident from the cases of those who were translated to heaven without undergoing temporal death. There have been only two who enjoyed this privilege, Enoch and Elijah; but two examples establish the conclusion as fully as a thousand would do. They show, that it is not from any necessary connexion between the death of the body and the perfection of the soul, that believers are not exempted from the former. This position is farther corroborated by what we know will take place at the second coming of Christ. "Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."* It is commonly said, that although some of the saints shall not die, they will undergo a change equivalent to death. I suspect that these are words without any distinct meaning; but if they do mean any thing, it is this, that upon those saints the same effect will be produced by the immediate power of God, which is produced upon the saints at present by temporal death. But this is to give up the point; it is to acknowledge that men may be fully sanctified without undergoing dissolution, for such will be the fact with respect to the last generation of the saints.

These remarks are intended to show you, that we are not able properly to assign the reason why the sentence of temporal death is not revoked in favour of the righteous. It has been said, that the design is to inspire them with abhorrence of sin, which is followed by such fatal effects; to keep them humble, and to give them an opportunity to display their faith, and patience, and hope. Without inquiring whether these purposes are sufficient to account for the fact, we remark that there is one thing which, if it should not solve the difficulty, will at least show that an end is accomplished which is in unison with the general tenor of the moral administration of God. In the present state, we must walk by faith and not by sight, or, in other words, we are to be regulated in the choice and practice of religion, not by the evidence of sense, but by the evidence of testimony. It is not given to us to see the realities of the world to come; to have ocular demonstration of the glorious reward of piety, and the terrible punishment of ungodliness. Although these are subjects of infinite importance, and our whole conduct should be influenced by them, all our knowledge comes through the medium of revelation. This, as some would say, places us in a state of trial. We are put to the test, whether we will repose such confidence in the word of God, as to enter upon that course of conduct, with all its privations and difficulties, which he has assured us will lead to a happy result. What is said on this subject would require to be guarded and qualified; and therefore, laying it aside for the present, I observe, that it appears to be the will of God, that faith should be our guide in the pilgrimage of life. But it would be subversive of this design to give an open and regular declaration in favour of the good, and against the bad, in the dispensations of Providence. Were it known, exactly, who are the objects of the love, and who of the hatred of God, that is, were it known in any other way than by the testimony of Scripture, the province of faith would be greatly circumscribed, and we should then see, what we are now called to believe. Had the righteous been exempted from temporal death, it would have been known to all who they were, and that their piety was recompensed, when they were openly translated to heaven. No person could have doubted of a future state, when he saw his acquaintances and neighbours removed to it; or have called in question the truth and advantages of religion, when he was himself a witness of the performance of its promises. Hence we perceive the reason, why God has admitted into his plan the temporal death of those who are interested in the atonement of his Son. It is to preserve the consistency of his administration, to exclude any thing which would have broken in upon its uniformity, and defeated its design. He leaves them apparently in the same situation with other men. Like them they are afflicted, and like them they die.

But, although one event happens to all, there is a great difference between the death of a righteous, and that of a wicked man; a difference not in the nature of the event considered as a physical fact, but in its design and consequences. In the case of the saint, it terminates, as we shall afterwards more fully see, his long and painful struggle with sin, and completes his restoration to the image of God, which has been carrying on, since the hour of his conversion, by the ordinances of religion and the dispensations of Providence. It closes also the scene of his sorrows; it releases the weary sufferer, and dismisses him to rest; it removes the veil which conceals the glories of the eternal world; it breaks down the partition-wall which separated him from his God. This moment he feels the agonies of expiring nature, or is lying in a state of insensibility; the next, he is full of life, and joy, and activity. We behold an heir of glory entering upon the possession of his inheritance; and death, which appears so dreadful to the by-stander, is to him the gate of life. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."* Often his latter end is peace in respect of his own feelings. His body may suffer pain, but his mind is tranquil, for he knows in whom he has believed, and is assured that he is able to keep the trust which he has committed to him. He is parting with those who have long been dear to him in the bonds of nature and friendship; but he is going home to his Father, and to the family of the first-born; and he leaves the objects of his affection to the care of Him who has led him all his life, and will take them under his protection. Natural affection remains in the bosom of a good man to the last, for it is the work of God, and his grace has refined and strengthened it; but he is actuated by a higher principle of heavenly love, and his soul longs for the enjoyment of his God: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth whom I desire beside thee."† But it may happen that the Christian shall not leave the world in the full assurance of hope. Death and fears may haunt his mind, and a cloud may rest upon his closing scene; yet still his latter end is peace, because it is safe. To him death has lost its sting; for its sting was sin, but through the blood of Christ his guilt is cancelled, and will not appear against him in judgment. Through the weakness of his faith, the king of terrors may wear an alarming aspect. But he is the messenger of his Father, and comes upon an errand of mercy. Angels are waiting to receive him, and as soon as his spirit has escaped from its frail and falling tabernacle, his fears will be exchanged for everlasting triumph.

The death of the righteous is sometimes described as a sleep. This is an example of euphonism, or that figure of rhetoric by which a thing unpleasant in itself is expressed by an agreeable name. It is not peculiar to the Scriptures, but was used by heathen writers, who not only call sleep, *mortis simillima imago*,‡ but speak of death under the notion of sleep itself:—

—ἱερὸν ὕπνον

Κοιμασαι· θνησκειν μη λεγε τους αγαθους.‖

It is proper, however, to remark, that the metaphor is

* 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

* Ps. xxxvii. 37. † Ps. lxxiii. 35.

‡ The most striking image of death.

‖ Kallimachi Epigramm. curâ Blomfield, p. 56. He sleeps a hallowed sleep; let it not be said that good men die.

sometimes employed to denote the state of the dead, without any reference to their character, as in the following passage: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."* Yet the more frequent use of the term in relation to the righteous, and the connection in which it is introduced, justify us in considering it as significant of the peaceful nature of their end. Speaking of the five hundred disciples to whom our Saviour appeared after his resurrection, Paul says, "of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep."† Luke thus describes the death of the first Christian martyr: "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge; and when he said this, he fell asleep."‡ And those in general who have died in the faith, are represented as sleeping in Jesus: "Them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him."‖ Thus the weary labourer, when evening comes, lies down upon his bed, and enjoys profound repose till the return of day.

Before I proceed to consider the state of the righteous in the grave, or the state of their bodies, I shall inquire what change takes place in their souls, and how they are disposed of. What makes death so terrible, is not simply the termination of the present life, although, even from this event, nature instinctively recoils; but the consequences in another state of being, the apprehension of a future reckoning, and of the punishment which conscience anticipates as the just recompense of our guilty deeds. When this fear is removed, death appears in a totally different light; and a man may calmly and even joyfully submit to it, if he has the hope of exchanging this frail and troubled life for a state of endless blessedness. But it is presupposed in this hope, that the soul survives the death of the body, and carries along with it, into the new region which it is appointed to inhabit, its consciousness and its capacity for happiness. It is necessary, therefore, to begin this part of the subject with the consideration of its immortality.

You all know the doubts entertained by the ancient heathens upon this subject, and especially by the learned and speculative among them. It is from them, indeed, that we know the opinion of the vulgar; but I think it probable that, as the latter felt greater reverence for the established mythology, so they were more steady in the belief of the future existence of the soul. We find that almost in every nation this belief prevails; and it is less likely to be called in question by those who do not indulge in vain reasonings, and who rest satisfied with the authority of tradition. I do not mean, that the more the subject is discussed the weaker the evidence will appear; but that, in consequence of the disadvantage under which unassisted reason labours in investigations of this kind, the result of its exertions has been rather an increase of doubt, than a settled persuasion. It is owing to this cause that the most celebrated philosophers of antiquity express themselves with hesitation, or vary their tone, using at one time the language of confidence, and at another that of uncertainty. The arguments brought forward by modern philosophers, in favour of the immortality of the soul, are better than those of their predecessors; but we shall greatly err, if we suppose that their superiority is the consequence of the gradual improvement of reason. It is true, indeed, that reason is improved; the advances, however, which it has made are not the fruits of its own unaided efforts, but of the assistance which it has derived from revelation. There can be no greater imposition attempted upon mankind, than when Christian divines, or Christian laymen, pretend to give a system of natural religion deduced from the principles of reason. What they call reason, is a compound of the natural suggestions of the mind and the truths of revelation; but they are not at pains to separate them, nor is it properly in their power, as men in general are not able to determine how much they owe to nature, and how much to education. It is sufficient to remind you, that such a system of natural religion as is now commonly exhibited, was never drawn up by a heathen. Christian countries give birth to the authors, and Christian instruction furnished them with the most valuable materials.

The first argument for the immortality of the soul is founded on its immateriality. It is not a material substance; and, as it does not consist of parts, it is not subject to dissolution. We learn by experience what are the qualities of matter, which is extended, divisible, inert; and we are led to believe that thought is not one of its properties, because we observe every where around us, that it exists without intelligence and without feeling. If thought essentially belonged to matter every part of it would think. There are only two ways in which it can be imagined to acquire the property of thinking; by a new modification of its parts, or by having the quality superadded to it. With regard to the latter hypothesis, although it has been adopted by some persons of great name, it is questionable whether they did or could affix any distinct idea to it. To endow matter with the faculty of thought, is to give it a new power, different from and contrary to all its original properties. We do not know the nature of substances, and can observe only their qualities; but, having ascertained these, we naturally conclude, that the substance to which they belong does not admit properties generically different from them. It seems to be as contrary to reason to suppose matter to be made capable of thought, as to suppose spirit to be made capable of figure and division. It avails nothing to appeal to the almighty power of God; because his power cannot work contradictions, or make a substance susceptible of qualities which do not essentially belong to it. He could change the nature of things; but while their nature continues, their properties are fixed and immutable. From all that we know of matter, it appears to be a substance on which the power of thinking could not be superinduced. The supposition that it is superadded to matter is absurd. If, then, matter could not be the substratum of a property essentially different from all its known qualities, we are necessarily led to the conclusion that where the power of thinking exists, there is a substance, different from matter, in which it inheres, or, in other words, a soul.

This reasoning is equally conclusive against the hypothesis that thought is the result of some modification of matter "Matter," says Dr. Johnson, "can differ from matter only in form, density, bulk, motion, and direction of motion. To which of these, however varied or combined, can consciousness be annexed? To be round or square, to be solid or fluid, to be great or little, to be moved slowly or swiftly, one way or another, are modes of material existence, all equally alien from the nature of cogitation. If matter be once without thought, it can only be made to think by some new modification; but all the modifications which it can admit are equally unconnected with cogitative powers."*

The argument for the immortality of the soul from its immaterial nature, is thus stated by the same celebrated writer. "Immateriality seems to imply a natural power of perpetual duration as a consequence of exemption from all causes of decay; whatever perishes is destroyed by the solution of its contexture, and separation of its parts; nor can we conceive how that which has no parts, and therefore admits no solution, can be naturally corrupted or impaired.—He who made the

* Dan. xii. 2. † 1 Cor. xv. 6. ‡ Acts vii. 60. ‖ 1 Thess. iv. 14.

* Rasselas, chap. xlviii.

soul can destroy it, since, however imperishable, it receives from a superior nature its power of duration. That it will not perish by any inherent cause of decay, or principle of corruption, may be shewn by philosophy; but philosophy can tell no more. That it will not be annihilated by Him that made it, we must learn from higher authority."*

Such is the amount of the first argument. The soul may live, and will live for ever, if such be the will of the Creator.

The second argument for the immortality of the soul, is founded on its powers, which are not only different from those that we observe in matter, but are superior to the powers of all the other inhabitants of this world. Man not only perceives what is present by means of his senses, as the lower animals do, and recollects the past, but stretches his views into the future, anticipates events to come, with greater or less certainty according to the grounds of expectation, and regulates his conduct with a reference to objects which he has not seen. His mind takes a wider range than this earth, to which his bodily presence is assigned, contemplates the phenomena of nature in the remote regions of the universe, and discovers the laws by which other worlds are governed. By a process of reasoning he rises from the effect to the cause, and ascends in thought to that mysterious Being, who, himself invisible, is seen by the reflection of his glory in his works. He traces the relations in which he stands to that Being and to his fellow creatures, ascertains the duties arising from these relations, and feels that he was made for a nobler purpose than the lower animals, which are ignorant of all those truths, and have no guide but their appetites and instincts. Is it conceivable that these high powers were conferred upon him solely for a temporary use; that these lights were kindled only to enable him to look around him during the short journey of life; that after having blazed for a few years, they are to be extinguished for ever; and that the being on whose path they shed so much brightness, and to whose eye they disclosed such sublime and interesting prospects, is to lie down in everlasting darkness, and mingle with the clods of the valley? In surveying the system of created things, we do not observe in any instance such a disproportion of means to the end. The inferior animals fulfil the purpose of their existence by their senses and instincts. Why was man made capable of attaining so much knowledge, which, on the supposition that death terminates his career, is manifestly useless to him? For useless certainly is the knowledge of religious and moral truths, of his Maker, and of his duty, if there is no state beyond the grave, in which the consequences of that knowledge will be experienced, and He who is now dimly perceived in his works, shall be clearly seen and fully enjoyed. We observe too, that the powers of man are progressive, while those of the lower animals are stationary. It is not found that, among them, the species is more improved in one age than in another, or that the individual ever advances beyond a certain point. But the faculties of man are gradually unfolded from infancy to manhood, and in some cases continue vigorous and active to extreme old age. Yet we can never say that they have reached perfection, or that man has made the highest possible intellectual effort, and attained all the knowledge of which he is capable. Were the soul to die with the body, the fate of man would be an instance of an abortive work of God, a work made for no intelligible purpose; and it is therefore more consonant to our ideas of Divine wisdom to believe, that, as it is capable from its nature of perpetual duration, and its powers admit of no limit which we know, it will pass into another state of conscious existence, and advance in an interminable career of improvement. Whether the argument be considered as conclusive or not, it undoubtedly affords a strong presumption in favour of the immortality of the soul; and as such we find it brought forward by the heathen philosophers. "I am persuaded," says Cicero, in his treatise *de Senectute*,* "since such is the activity of the soul, such is the memory of the past and the foresight of the future, such are its arts and sciences, and inventions, that the nature which comprehends these things cannot be mortal."

The third argument for the immortality of the soul, is founded upon the operations of conscience, the office of which is to judge of right and wrong, as the understanding judges of truth and error; to enjoin the one and forbid the other; to acquit or condemn us according to our conduct; to summon us to the higher tribunal of our Maker; and to anticipate the consequences of his sentence in another state of existence. To evade this argument, conscience has been represented as a factitious faculty, as the effect of education; and hence, it has been said, it is not uniform in its dictates, but commands and prohibits according to the notions of morality which prevail in a particular country. But the only inference which should be deduced from this fact is, that conscience is liable to be perverted as well as the understanding. If it would be absurd to deny that our minds possess the power of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, because we are subject to innumerable errors, and the wildest opinions have been believed, not only by the vulgar, but by philosophers; it would be equally absurd to conclude, that there is no such principle as conscience, because virtue has been sometimes called vice, and vice virtue. The operations of conscience, amidst the manifold errors into which it has been betrayed, are a proof that it is natural to the mind. It may be misled, but it still exists. It is found in all ages, in all nations, and under all religions; and we must therefore conclude, that it is an essential principle of our nature. It was planted in our bosom by the hand of the Creator, and its clear unbiassed dictates must be regarded as his commands. If it point to a future state, it is He who is reminding us that this is only the first and probationary stage of our being; that the consequences of our moral actions will not be limited to our present circumstances; and that, when our course is finished, a retribution will take place. In short, the anticipations of conscience, which are common to heathens and to Christians, are an evidence that the soul will pass into another state, where those anticipations will be realized.

In corroboration of this argument, I proceed to mention a fourth, which is drawn from the unequal distribution of good and evil in the present life. That God is the moral Governor of the world, we may assume as a truth, because it has been already proved, and is denied by none but atheists. We have a witness to it within us, in the operations of conscience, which not only reminds us that he has given us a law for the regulation of our conduct, but acquits and condemns us in his name, and refers us to his future judgment for the ratification and execution of the sentence. But the present state of things, as we all acknowledge, does not accord with our ideas of a perfect moral administration. It is an ancient complaint, that "all things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath."† The promiscuous manner in which men of different characters are treated, seems to confound all moral distinctions. But great as this disorder may be accounted, there still is

* Rasselas, chap. xlviii.

* On old age. † Eccles. ix. 2.

a greater. "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked: again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous."* The lot of the righteous is such as that of the wicked should be, and the lot of the wicked as that of the righteous. Exceptions there are in the course of the Divine government; and righteousness is sometimes rewarded, and unrighteousness punished in the present life. But a few examples of this nature can only be set in opposition to innumerable examples of a different character, in order to show that notwithstanding the latter, there is such a principle in the Divine nature as justice, and consequently, that there is ground to expect its full developement under another dispensation. It may be objected, that, although virtue and vice are not visibly recompensed, yet there is a secret retribution in the satisfaction which flows from virtue, and the uneasiness which is the consequence of vice. But, besides that the want of visibility in this retribution does not answer the ends of God's moral government, by vindicating his character and upholding the authority of his law; it may be remarked that, if a future state were left out of the question, both the pleasure and the pain would be greatly diminished, if not annihilated. Many a wicked man would feel no uneasiness, if he were freed from the forebodings of conscience; and in many cases at least, the pleasure arising from virtuous dispositions and actions would not counterbalance the evils with which they are accompanied. The state of the case then, is this, that God has given a law to the human race, and announced his intention to reward obedience, and punish disobedience; yet we find that there is no regular distribution of rewards and punishments; that there is no regular plan according to which affairs are conducted; that sometimes the righteous and the wicked are placed in the same circumstances, both enduring the evils of life, or both enjoying its good things; and that at other times, their condition exhibits an unexpected contrast, while those who should have been happy are involved in affliction, and those who should have been miserable are surrounded with earthly blessings. If we believe that there is a God, and that he is just and good, we must conclude that this life is not the whole of man; we must believe that it is only a state of discipline and trial, and that his treatment according to his desert, is with manifest propriety deferred till he have finished his course. We must believe that after death is the judgment, when he shall receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or evil. Reason assents to the doctrine of revelation, and has led men in every age and nation to expect a future state of happiness or misery. But this belief implies the immortality of the soul. It implies that it will survive the death of the body; and, in the language of an inspired writer, that when "the dust returns to the earth as it was, the spirit will return to God who gave it."†

The last argument is derived from the universal belief of the immortality of the soul. Another argument has, indeed, been founded upon the desire of immortality which prevails among mankind; but it is questionable whether it possesses much solidity. The desire has been considered as instinctive, and consequently, as an indication by our Creator himself of our continued existence; but it does not appear to be different from the love of life, which is common to us and the inferior animals. It is simply a desire that we may not be deprived of the precious blessing of life; and we may say the same desire is virtually felt by every living creature. But because God has implanted in us a strong love of life, it does not follow, in our case more than in theirs, that our life will not come to an end.—The belief of the immortality of the soul, can be traced in the history of all civilized nations, and even among savage tribes. It prevailed among the Greeks and Romans, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Persians, the Indians, and the Gauls; and wherever modern travellers have gone, and have had an opportunity to inquire into the opinions of the nations, it has been found that an idea was entertained, more or less distinct, of a state beyond the grave. "The immortality of the soul," as Cicero said long ago, "is established by the consent of all nations." The argument founded upon it is this:—Either this consent results from the uniform suggestions of reason, in every country and in every age, and ought therefore to be considered as the voice of God himself giving notice of our destiny; or, it is the consequence of a tradition descending from the first parents of mankind, who were taught by their Creator that their souls should never die. I acknowledge that the universality of an opinion is not, of itself, a proof of its truth, because there are some notions of religion in which men have agreed, and when without supernatural instruction, still agree, but which we know to be erroneous. But when an opinion is neither contradicted by reason nor revelation, its prevalence among nations separated by time and place, and between whom there was no communication, necessarily leads us to the hypothesis of a common origin, and demonstrates, that as it is congenial to the wishes, so it is consonant to the natural dictates of the mind. And although the maxim, *Vox populi, est vox Dei*,* is so far from being uniformly true that it is very frequently false, yet in the present case it may be admitted; and there seems reason to think that it was the Creator himself who taught man to believe that he is made for immortality.

* Eccles. viii. 14. † Ib. xii. 7.

* The voice of the people is the voice of God.

LECTURE LXXXI.

ON THE DEATH OF THE SAINTS, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

The Doctrine of the Immortality of the soul founded on the testimony of Christ.—Completion of Sanctification at Death.—Doctrine of an Intermediate State: of the sleep of the Soul: of Purgatory.—Arguments against Purgatory.—The best argument for it.

The arguments for the immortality of the soul which were stated in the preceding lecture, have been considered as conclusive; and, although they do not all possess the same strength, yet their united evidence has been deemed sufficient to be the ground of a rational conviction. But I must remind you again, that although they were known in substance to the wise men of the Heathen world, they failed to give satisfaction. Let us not be surprised at this fact, and wonder that they did not clearly perceive, and confidently embrace, a truth of which the proof seems to us to be complete. Not to say that it is more fully and luminously exhibited by Christian Divines than by Heathen philosophers, I would remark, that the connection between the premises and the conclusion appears more certain to us, because we know the conclusion beforehand, and are persuaded of it on other grounds. The demonstrations of reason are brought forward in favour of a point of which we entertain no doubt, and the arguments come home to us with full force, because we are prepared to acquiesce in them. They accord with our previous sentiments, carry us forward in a train in which we have been accustomed to move, and terminate in a point which has long been

the resting-place of our thoughts. But it would be folly to suppose, that the reasoning would impart the same conviction to a man who had long sought in vain for satisfaction, and, having viewed the subject on all sides, and been tossed up and down between hope and fear, had finally abandoned the expectation of arriving at certainty.

The truth is, that to Christians these arguments are not necessary, except when they are contending with such as deny revelation; and then they are of use, not to satisfy their own minds, but to prove to their opponents that, in maintaining the immortality of the soul, they are supported by reason, and that none offend against reason but those by whom the doctrine is impugned. Our faith in this fundamental article of religion does not rest upon arguments, but upon authority. The ground on which we are assured of the future existence of the soul, is the testimony of our Saviour,—one sentence from whose lips is of greater weight than all the reasonings of philosophers, whether heathen or Christian. Why should we follow a circuitous and uncertain path, when the highway is before us? or why should we light a torch, when the sun is pouring around us the full splendour of his beams?

"Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."* To bring any thing to light, is to draw it from its place of concealment into open day. The words now quoted may be therefore understood to import, that our Saviour was the first who discovered, or made known to the world, the doctrine of immortality; and hence the accuracy of the Apostle's statement may be questioned, because even the heathens were in some degree acquainted with it, and the Jews unquestionably entertained the hope of a life beyond the grave. But the word, φωτίζω, signifies not only to *give light*, and to *make manifest*, but to *render luminous*, by shedding greater lustre upon an object already seen; and in this sense, I apprehend, it is used on this occasion by the Apostle. Jesus Christ has illuminated, or rendered plain and perspicuous, the doctrine of immortality.

He has given the most explicit assurances of the future existence of the soul. He has spoken of it as a subject that is not only probable, but absolutely certain. He has assumed it as a fact about which there could not be any question, and which those whom he addressed were understood to believe. The object which he had in view was not to prove it, but to give such information respecting it as should have a practical influence upon the minds of his followers. His aim was not properly to convince them that there is a future state, but to exhibit it as an object of hope, as the state in which his promises of perfect and eternal felicity would be performed. There is only one occasion on which we find him reasoning in support of this doctrine, namely, when he was contending with the infidel sect of the Sadducees, who denied the immortality of the soul; and even then he did not appeal to the dictates of reason, but to higher authority, the writings of Moses, which they acknowledged to be divine. It would not have become him to have spoken of it in a different manner; to have treated it as a matter of speculation; to have seemed for a moment to admit that the evidence was not complete; to have entered into a train of argumentation, as the heathen philosophers had done, and Christian Divines still do, in their treatises on Natural Theology. He was the Son of God, who had descended to the earth for the instruction of mankind; and his words were oracles. All his sayings were to be received on his own authority; and to those who believed that he came from God, his authority was sufficient. The Lord of the invisible world was acquainted with its secrets, and a hint from him was more satisfactory than the pretended discoveries of all the wise and learned.

Now, Jesus Christ has assured us that man has a soul distinct from the body; that it is not annihilated by the stroke which lays the body in the grave; that after its separation it enters upon a new state of being; and that, as those who die in impenitence shall be plunged into darkness and misery, so his faithful followers shall be admitted into the realms of light, and enjoy there everlasting felicity. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go away, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father."*

I have laid before you the evidence which reason can produce for the existence of the soul after death, and have shown you that, whatever force may be assigned to it, it is upon the doctrines and promises of the Gospel that the hope of Christians rests.

When we speak of the immortality of the soul in reference to believers, we mean not only the continuance of its consciousness and activity, but its existence in a state of perfection and felicity. As it is subject to imperfection and infirmity to the last hour of life, as the believer, even when he is standing on the verge of the eternal world, is still sinful as well as mortal, a change must take place immediately after its separation from the body, to qualify it for the new state into which it is introduced. This change our Church expresses by its being "made perfect in holiness;" and it proceeds upon the authority of Scripture, for the souls in heaven are called "the spirits of just men made perfect."†

There are different reasons which render the change necessary. First, Although God is pleased in the present state to hold communion with men, who are not perfect, through the mediation of his Son, yet it is his will that every stain of impurity should be removed from those who are admitted into his immediate presence. The inhabitants of the heavenly paradise must be holy, as Adam was in the garden of Eden. The image of their Maker, which was defaced by sin, must be fully restored, and shine with its original lustre, that he may again look with complacency upon the work of his hands. Were there any remains of sin in heaven, it might seem that his own purity was not absolutely perfect, and that evil might dwell with him; but the complete redemption of the objects of his love from the slightest moral taint, will demonstrate his holiness as well as his goodness. In the place where he is manifested in the full splendour of his infinite excellencies, there is not a corner which is not illuminated. "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."‡ Secondly, Unless the souls of the saints were perfectly pure, they would be unfit for the society into which they are admitted in the other world. Heaven is the original abode of the angels; but, in consequence of redemption, it is destined to be the habitation also of men, united in one family with angels. At present there is a connection between them, for the angels minister to the saints; but what passes is silent and unseen. It is not properly a correspondence, but a series of good offices performed by the one party to the other; and to this general intercourse the imperfection of the saints presents no obstacles. But, were the disembodied spirits of the latter to mingle with the

* 2 Tim. i. 10.

* John x. 28. John xiv. 2. Matth. xiii. 34, 43.
† Heb. xii. 23. ‡ Rev. xxi. 27.

holy spirits around the throne, while they retained the darkness, and infirmity, and irregular affections to which they were subject upon earth, we cannot conceive that the intercourse could be cordial and agreeable upon either side. The celestial spirits would be often offended, and the human spirits would be abashed and dismayed. There would be an overwhelming superiority on the one hand, and a humiliating sense of inferiority on the other. There would be wanting an entire congeniality of sentiment and feeling. It is necessary, therefore, that men should be as angels, by possessing faculties, if not equal in strength, yet equally free from the pollution of sin, and equally prompt to engage in the sublime and fervent devotions of the heavenly sanctuary. This leads me to remark, in the third place, That, unless the souls of the saints were rendered perfectly holy at death, they could not fully enjoy the felicity of the future state. They could not enter with the whole heart into the service, and might occasionally feel a reluctance to it, when the unrenewed part of their nature shed its malignant influence upon them. Their love might at one time burn with an ardent flame, and at other times might be faint and languid. For the diversity of their state of feeling during the present life, we may, in some measure, account by the influence of the body, and we are totally incapable of conceiving the operations of the soul, when freed from this incumbrance. But, although it might be exempt from some affections which it at present experiences by means of the body, yet its temper would still be subject to fluctuation while it was actuated by two different and opposite principles, and it could not feel that fervent, sustained, undivided love to God, which is at once the duty and the felicity of every rational creature. Wherever sin exists, there cannot be pure enjoyment. Even when its influence is circumscribed, it is still a cloud which intercepts some portion of the rays of the sun, a foreign ingredient which infuses bitterness into the cup of pleasure. The saint, whose most delightful hours on earth are spent in fellowship with God, would indeed feel himself at home in heaven; but the faintest trace of sin would cause an abatement of his bliss.

The work of sanctification is completed, at the separation of the soul from the body. We have reason to think that the soul does not remain a moment longer tainted with sin. Angels carry it into the presence of God, and it appears before him in a state of unsullied purity. If to the question, how this sudden change is effected? we are not able to return an answer, there is no cause for surprise; because we are equally ignorant of the mode of its initial and progressive change in the present life. We may think that we know more about it, because we are acquainted with the means which are employed; but the truth is, that the means are the limit of our knowledge; and this will be manifest when we reflect, that here is a general application of them, an application where, in many instances, no effect is produced, and no man can perceive the reason of their success in one case, and of their failure in another. We are compelled to have recourse to a supernatural cause, the agency of the Holy Ghost, which is exerted or suspended from motives which we cannot assign. It is not from want of power that he does not perfect his work in an instant, but because he acts conformably to a plan settled by divine wisdom; and when the time comes to change the plan, he can let forth at once such a measure of his influences as shall insure its immediate completion. In this world believers are "sanctified through the truth," that is, the power which sanctifies them is exerted by means of the truth, agreeably to the constitution of our rational nature. The soul, on its entrance into another world, will see God as he is, and by the contemplation of his glory, will be perfectly transformed into his image.

Perfect holiness implies, that there are no errors in the understanding, no waywardness in the will, no irregularity in the affections; that the mind is filled with light, and the heart with love; that the whole soul is such as God requires it to be, and presents a spectacle on which he can look with unqualified approbation. At present the saints cannot form a distinct idea of this state, because they have not experienced it; but they may judge of it by analogy, because they are already the subjects of the sanctifying operations of the Spirit, as we judge of any object by seeing an outline of it. The nearest approach to it is made in those moments of elevated devotion, when the Christian, abstracted from external things and absorbed in the contemplation of the Divine glory, can say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in earth whom I desire besides thee;" when the motions of sin are suspended, and he is conscious only of love, and joy, and holy desires.

I have only one remark more to make, that the perfect holiness which the soul attains at its separation from the body, is not mutable like the holiness of Adam, but fixed and permanent. The saints are made "pillars in the temple of their God, and shall go no more out." All creatures are mutable in themselves, but the power of the Creator can establish men, as it has established angels. The saints will retain freedom of will in the heavenly world, but liberty is not inconsistent with an immutable state. God is a free agent, but he cannot change; angels are free agents but they cannot fall into sin; and the saints will be free, although their inclinations are directed to one object, and their choice is forever fixed. Such will be their love of holiness and their hatred of sin, that a transition from the one to the other will be morally impossible. Besides, in the heavenly state, they will be exposed to no temptation. There will be nothing in external objects to allure the senses, for there only righteousness dwells; and into the new paradise no seducing spirit can enter to make trial of its inhabitants. The season of trial will be past, and the state which succeeds it is a state of repose and enjoyment. The present administration of the divine government, so far as they are concerned, will then be at an end; and rewards and punishments will be finally distributed. There will be no call, therefore, for the anxious vigilance which is now indispensably necessary, for precautions are not requisite when there is no danger. They will rejoice in their perfect security, and serve God without fear.

To the doctrine which has now been laid down respecting the state of the soul after death, different theories are opposed, less or more remote from the truth, but all concurring in this general position, that the disembodied spirit does not immediately pass into its ultimate abode.

The first theory is founded upon the terms used in Scripture to express the state of the soul subsequent to temporal death, and not a little critical ingenuity has been displayed in supporting it. On the subject of the future state, a variety of terms are employed in the New Testament, as, ἁδης, ὁ κολπος Αβρααμ, παραδεισος, ταρταρος, γεεννα, and ουρανος.* Ἁδης, which corresponds with the Hebrew word שאול, signifies according to its etymology, (from α privative, and ιδεω, to see), *the invisible state*, and is understood to be the general name of the region into which human spirits pass on leaving the body. It consists of two provinces, separated from each other by a great gulf or wide interval—ὁ κολπος Αβρααμ or παραδεισος, and ταρταρος—the one the

* The unseen state; Abraham's bosom; paradise; Tartarus, (hell;) Gehenna, (hell;) heaven.

receptacle of the righteous, and the other the receptacle of the wicked. While in these receptacles, they are in an intermediate state; for when the final judgment takes place, the righteous will enter into *ουρανος*, or *heaven*, properly so called, and the wicked into *γεεννα*, or *hell*. It is supposed, according to this theory, that the souls of men possess consciousness and activity in this intermediate state, and experience happiness or misery; and thus far it is not at variance with the doctrine which we hold. If it farther implies, that they are not as happy or as miserable as they will be in heaven and in hell, it accords even here with the common belief, that the reward of the righteous, and the punishment of guilty souls, will not be consummated till they have been reunited to their respective bodies, and sentence have been pronounced upon them at the final judgment. All the difference seems to consist in the places assigned to them during the interval between death and the resurrection. But, in speaking of places in the invisible world, we can affix no distinct ideas to our words, as they are all equally unknown to us. The hypothesis, therefore, of an intermediate state, although it were satisfactorily established, would be no real accession to our knowledge; it would merely make us acquainted with a fact which we could not understand or apply to any practical use, and which would be to us a matter of pure speculation. This, indeed, would not be a reason for rejecting it, if it were clearly taught in the Scriptures; but however plausible is the reasoning in favour of it, I think it is not reconcilable to the passages which represent believers, when they die, as entering into heaven, and into the place where Christ is; and it rests in a great measure upon criticism, the value of which scholars alone can appreciate, and upon descriptions of the future state, which are confessedly figurative. I shall therefore dismiss it without farther notice.

I proceed to consider another theory, which is directly opposed to our doctrine concerning the state of the soul after death. Some modern Divines have contended that it is asleep or unconscious, and will remain so till the resurrection. It may be objected, that it is impossible to conceive a spirit to be in this state, as the idea which is always entertained of it is, that it is a living, thinking, active substance; and that its separation from the body, instead of being an argument for its insensibility, as if it could not act without bodily organs, is rather an argument against it; because, being no longer fettered and impeded by a substance dull and inert, it is at full liberty to exert its native energies, as smothered fire breaks out into a flame, when it obtains a free communication with the atmosphere. To such reasoning they reply, by appealing to passages of Scripture which appear to favour their hypothesis, and quote those which speak of the dead as asleep, as knowing nothing, as incapable of praising God, and lying in darkness and silence.

The first answer is, that such language is to be considered as figurative, and may be explained by metaphor and synecdoche. When the dead are said to be asleep, a metaphor is used, founded upon the striking resemblance between death and sleep, which is called by the poet, *mortis simillima imago*; and at the same time, in this as in other instances, by another trope, a part is spoken of as the whole. The dead are said to sleep, and to be unconscious and inactive, because these things are true of their bodies. It is worthy of attention, that similar language has been adopted by other nations besides the Jews, and is in common use among us, although we believe, as well as they did, that souls are active in the invisible state. We should think that the man reasoned very inconclusively, who, when he heard us saying of the dead, that they are ignorant of all that is passing on the earth, that they are motionless and without feeling, and are no longer capable of good or evil, inferred, that we supposed, either that their souls had died with their bodies, or that their faculties were dormant and their consciousness was gone. Every man would perceive, in this case, the folly of making common language, founded as it evidently is upon appearances, the standard of our philosophical or metaphysical opinions. It is equally improper to interpret thus the language of Scripture, which adopts on this occasion the style of common conversation, as it is acknowledged to do in speaking of the apparent motion of the sun around the earth.

The second answer to the conclusion drawn from the passages cited above, is, that to understand them as importing the insensibility of the soul in its separate state, is contrary to other passages in which its conscious existence is most explicitly affirmed. When Stephen said with his dying breath, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,"* he manifestly supposed that his soul should immediately pass into the presence of his Saviour. Our Lord's promise to the penitent thief, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise,"† implies, if words have any meaning, that ere that day was finished, his soul should be in the same place with the soul of Christ, and should enjoy the blessedness which the word "paradise" suggests. In the fifth chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul proceeds upon the supposition, that believers, as soon as they leave this world, enter upon a happier state: "For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."‡ The one event immediately follows the other,—the entrance into the heavenly house, the removal from the earthly. The same thing is implied when he says, that he was "in a strait betwixt two," whether to remain upon earth, or "to depart and to be with Christ, which was far better."‖ Certainly he believed, that as soon as he departed he should be with Christ, as is clear both from the words themselves, and from his strait; for, if he had known that he was to remain in a state of insensibility for thousands of years, he could not have hesitated, for a moment, whether it would be better to sink into that state, or to continue in life, engaged in the most important services, and enjoying the delights of communion with God. To evade this argument, a distinction is made between absolute and relative time; the former meaning time considered in itself, independently of human perceptions; the latter, time as perceived by us. In respect of absolute time, it is granted that the saints are not with Christ as soon as they depart from this world; but they are so in respect of relative time, for however long the interval may be, they are not conscious of it, and it will seem to them but a moment. "But does the Apostle," to adopt the words of Dr. Campbell, "any where give a hint that this is his meaning? or is it what any man would naturally discover from his words? That it is exceedingly remote from the common use of language, I believe hardly any of those who favour this scheme will be partial enough to deny. Did the sacred penmen then mean to put a cheat upon the world, and by the help of an equivocal expression, to flatter men with the hope of entering, the moment they expire, on a state of felicity, when in fact they knew that it would be many ages before it would take place? But, were the hypothesis about the extinction of the mind between death and the resurrection well founded, the apparent coincidence they speak of is not so clear as they seem to think it. For my part, I cannot regard it as an axiom, and I never heard of any who attempt-

* Acts vii. 59. † Luke xxiii. 43. ‡ Verse 1.
‖ Phil. i. 23.

ed to demonstrate it. To me it appears merely a corollary from Mr. Locke's doctrine, which derives our conceptions of time from the succession of our ideas; which, whether true or false, is a doctrine to be found only among certain philosophers, and which, we may reasonably believe, never came into the heads of those to whom the Gospel in the apostolic age was announced."*

The distinction between absolute and relative time is totally inapplicable to the following words: "We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."† He had said before, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord."† I do not conceive it possible to express, in a clearer manner, the immediate transition of the soul from its present habitation into the presence of Christ. What detains us from his presence, is our continuance in the body; what introduces us into it, is our departure from the body. Our absence from the body, and our presence with him, are closely connected; the latter succeeds the former without any interval. Would it have ever entered into the mind of any person of common sense, if there had been no theory to support, that after all, hundreds and thousands of years might intervene? and would the Apostle have said, with any regard to truth, that, when "absent from the body, we should be present with the Lord," if he had believed that the soul, in a state of separation, is insensible, and does not recover its consciousness till it is reunited to the body, and consequently can then only be with Christ? It is evident to every reader, that the doctrine which he lays down in this passage, is exactly the reverse of the theory which we are combating.

On the whole, the Scriptures proceed on the supposition, that, as soul and body are distinct, the former is capable of happiness or misery in a separate state. The story of the rich man and Lazarus is a proof of it. So are those passages which speak of the spirits of just men as made perfect; of the souls of the martyrs as alive; and of the departed saints as assembled in heaven, and engaged in the worship of God. Parables and prophetic visions are not to be literally interpreted; but the substance of them must be true, that is to say, the general instructions which they convey must be conformable to fact, or they would be no better than fables. It is unnecessary to trouble you with any more quotations, as, I presume, you are all satisfied that the hypothesis of the sleep of the soul is a wild fancy, founded on a misapprehension of some passages of Scripture, and directly contrary to its most explicit declarations. I have only to add, that some of the passages to which we have appealed, are equally conclusive against an intermediate state, as they teach the immediate entrance of the soul into the place where Christ now is, which all will acknowledge, is the heaven of heavens; for he ascended far above "all heavens, that he might fill all things."

We come now to the last hypothesis respecting the state of departed souls. It is the doctrine of the Church of Rome, that the saints do not immediately pass into glory, but first go into a place called purgatory, where they are purified by fire from the stains of sin, which had not been washed out during the present life. This doctrine, Protestants affirm, was unknown to the church till the days of Gregory the Great, as he is called, about the end of the sixth, or the beginning of the seventh century; but the way seems to have been prepared for it by certain opinions, which prevailed prior to that period, as we learn from the writings of the Fathers. A strange notion was entertained by some respecting the fire which will burn up the earth and its works; that all should pass through it, that it would completely purify the bodies of those who were to be glorified, and that the more holy any person had been, he should feel the less pain from this process. With regard to the souls of the righteous, they believed, that they were in a place of rest and enjoyment, but that they should not be admitted to the beatific vision till the resurrection was past. Hence arose the practice of praying for the dead. Conceiving that they had not yet attained full felicity, the ancients thought that they might be benefited by their prayers, which would procure to them a greater degree of enjoyment. You will observe that, although these opinions were fit materials for fancy and superstition to work up into a still more extravagant form, they were widely different from the doctrine afterwards established by the Church of Rome as an article of faith.

The prototype of the doctrine of Papists on this subject is to be found in heathenism, from which they have borrowed their cumbersome apparatus of ceremonies, and many of their religious opinions. The existence of a purgatory is plainly taught in the writings of both poets and philosophers. In the sixth book of the Æneid, Anchises explains to his son, who had visited him in the Shades, the process which souls were doomed to undergo, before they could be admitted into the Elysian fields, that they might be freed from the stains of sin which adhered to them at death;

> "Ergo exercentur pœnis, veterumque malorum
> Supplicia expendunt."*

Some, he says, are stretched out to the winds; others are purified by being plunged into an immense whirlpool or lake; and others are subjected to the operation of fire—

> "Infectum scelus exuritur igni."†

In his dialogue entitled Phædo, Plato informs us that when men enter into the invisible state, they are judged. Those who are neither truly virtuous, nor consummately wicked, are carried away to the Acherusian lake, where, having suffered the punishment of their unjust deeds, they are dismissed, and then receive the reward of their good actions. Those who, on account of the greatness of their sins, are incurable, are cast into Tartarus, from which they shall never escape. Those who have committed curable sins—ιαστα αμαρτηματα—and have repented, must also fall into Tartarus, but after a certain period they will be delivered from it.

In both these passages, we have a very exact description of the Popish purgatory; and, as there is no trace of it in the Bible, we conclude that this is the source from which it has been derived. The resemblance will appear more striking, if you reflect that, in both cases, it rests precisely upon the same foundation, the curable and incurable sins of Plato answering exactly to the venial and mortal sins of Papists. By mortal sins, they understand those which alienate men entirely from God, and are worthy of eternal death; and they may be compared to those bodily wounds which, by their own nature, cause the destruction of life. Venial sins do not turn away the sinner altogether from God, although they impede his approach to him; and they may be expiated, because their nature is so light that they do not exclude a person from grace, or render him an enemy to God. Mortal sins are few, if I rightly remember, only seven, and even these are so explained away by their casuists, the most unblushingly profligate that the world ever saw, that the number is still farther reduced, and scarcely one

* Campbell on the Gospels, Diss. vi. part ii. § 23.
† 2 Cor. v. 8, & 6.

* Æneid. vi. 739, 740. Therefore they are afflicted with pains, and pay the penalties of former evil deeds.
† Ib. 743. Unatoned crime is burned away with fire.

is left upon the list. All other sins are venial, or pardonable; or, in the language of Plato, ἁμαρτηματα ἰατμα. They are expiated partly by penances in this life, and partly by the pains of purgatory, the place appointed for completing the atonement.

Another distinction has been contrived by the Church of Rome, with a view to support its doctrine concerning satisfaction for sin in the future state. The pardon of sin we understand to consist in the full remission of guilt or of the obligation to punishment, so that to the pardoned man there is no condemnation; but they take a different view. They affirm that there are two kinds of guilt, *reatus culpæ, the guilt of the fault*, and *reatus pœnæ, the guilt of the punishment*. The former is remitted, and the latter is retained; or in other words, the penitent sinner is absolved from the sentence of eternal death, but is still subject to temporal punishment. Thus speaks the Council of Trent: "If any man shall say, that after justification the fault is so remitted to a penitent sinner, or the guilt of eternal punishment is so blotted out, that there remains no guilt of temporal punishment to be endured, in this life or in the future life in purgatory, before he can be admitted into the kingdom of heaven: let him be accursed."* Now, Purgatory has been fitted up as a great penitentiary, into which the half-pardoned culprits are sent, that they may undergo the painful but wholesome discipline, by which they will be qualified for full restoration to the favour of God.

The notion of purgatory is so gross and palpably false, that the common sense of every man would reject it, where it is not perverted and overpowered by authority and prejudice. Can a person have any idea in his mind, when he talks of souls being purified by fire? Might he not, with equal propriety, speak of a spirit being nourished with bread and wine? The soul is supposed to be a material substance, (upon which alone fire can act,) contrary to the belief even of the abettors of purgatory, who admit, as well as we, the spirituality of its essence. This single remark is sufficient. The whole fabric tumbles to the ground. Purgatory, as explained by the followers of Antichrist, is physically impossible.

It is unnecessary to enter into a minute refutation of an opinion which refutes itself, and is at variance with the dictates of reason as well as of revelation. It were easy to show that it is subversive of the atonement of Christ, of the doctrine of justification by faith, of the peace, and consolation, and hope of the people of God. The testimonies from Scripture, which have been already produced to prove that the souls of believers immediately pass into the presence of Christ, are all arguments against the purgatory of Papists. Yet, as those who profess to be Christians find it necessary, or at least expedient, to have some appearance of support from Scripture, they allege certain quotations from it, the sound of which seems to favour their sentiments.

They appeal, for example, to the words of our Lord concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost, that "it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come;"† from which it is inferred, that some sins are forgiven in the world to come. It is, however, a little hazardous to build a theory upon the slender foundation of a solitary expression, especially when it admits of a different interpretation. Our Lord may be conceived to have adopted the current language of the Jews, who called their own state, the present world, and that under the Messiah, the world to come; and in this view he asserts, that the sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven under any dispensation of religion. It is plain that his design is to assert the unpardonable nature of the sin; and for this purpose he uses a phraseology which excluded all hope, as we say, that a thing will not be done either now or hereafter. It shall never be done.

Another passage, which is brought forward to support the notion of purgatory, is in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, where the Apostle, speaking of the different superstructures which men might erect upon the true foundation, says, "Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." "If any man's work shall be burnt he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."* But nothing more can be gained from this passage in favour of the doctrine than an empty sound. This fire is for trial; the fire of purgatory is for punishment. This fire tries the works of men; the fire of purgatory purifies their persons. This fire tries all works whether good or bad; the fire of purgatory is kindled only for the latter. It is a figurative description of the effects of divine judgments, in sweeping away the false opinions which even good men may hold and publish in connexion with the great truths of the gospel; or, of the future judgment, when every work shall be made manifest, and some of the views and practices even of genuine believers, into which, although they hold Christ the head, they were betrayed through ignorance and prejudice, will be disapproved, although they themselves shall receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. The fire will consume the wood, hay, and stubble, but will not touch their persons. Other passages which are referred to are still less to the purpose.

The best argument for purgatory is the immense gain which it brings to the worthless church that patronizes it. The satisfaction of Jesus Christ, and the surplus satisfaction of the saints who suffered more than their sins deserved, are dealt out by the Pope and his underlings for the benefit of the living and the dead. But, although freely they have received, they are not disposed freely to give. They, no doubt, think it reasonable, that a treasure so precious should not be thrown away, and that, if souls are to be relieved from excruciating sufferings, their friends on earth should pay for so valuable a favour. Great efficacy is ascribed to masses and prayers said for them; but if there are no wages, there will be no work. The miserable beings in prison may remain there, and be tormented forever, for aught that the vicar of Christ and his servants will do in their behalf, if there is not a more powerful motive than charity. Great sums of money have therefore been given, and rich endowments have been founded, to secure the prayers and masses of the priests; and such was their influence in past ages, that, if the civil power had not arrested their progress, they would have engrossed the greater part of the property of Christendom. The delusion was supported by a train of false miracles, and visions, and revelations, with which the legends of the Church of Rome are filled, and which one does not know, whether to despise for their silliness, or to abhor for their impiety.

* De Justificatione, Canon. xxx. † Matth. xii. 32.

LECTURE LXXXII.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

State of the Body after Death.—The Resurrection.—Proofs of it.—Believed by the Jews.—Universality of the Resurrection.—Identity of our Present and Future Bodies.—Resurrection, the work of Divine Power.—Connexion between the Resurrection of Christ and that of the Saints.—The Nature of the Bodies of the Saints.—Opinion respecting a Partial Resurrection.

We have seen that all must die, the righteous as well as the wicked, for the grave is the house appoint-

* 1 Cor. iii. 13. 15.

ed for all living. Confining our attention to the former, we have inquired what becomes of their souls; and it has appeared, that as, being distinct from the body, they survive their separation from it, so they neither sink into sleep, nor enter into an intermediate state, but are made perfect in holiness, and immediately pass into heaven. Besides the explicit assurances which are contained in the Scriptures, we are led to the conclusion by the consideration, that the sleep of a disembodied spirit is inconceivable: that the purgation of it by fire, is physically impossible; and that to suppose a process of expiatory discipline, is derogatory to the perfection of the atonement of Christ.

The next subject of inquiry is the state of the body after death. It may seem sufficient to say, that it is committed to the grave, in which it putrefies, and after a certain time is reduced to dust. This is the popular view of the subject; and as the language commonly used is founded upon the words of Scripture, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,"* so it is sufficiently accurate for ordinary purposes. It is certain that all that is earthy in the human body is reduced to earth; but this is only an inconsiderable part of it. It is a vulgar error to suppose that the body is a solid mass of matter. On being subjected to an analysis, it is found to be a compound of different substances; and, when the air involved in it is extricated, and the fluids are evaporated, the residuum is much less than is commonly imagined. It is enough to have adverted to this subject in passing. At death, the body is committed to the grave, or is disposed of in some other way; and what of man is mortal perishes to our apprehension.

When speaking of the death of the saints, the Scriptures say that they "die in the Lord," and "sleep in Jesus;"† and from these expressions it has been inferred, that, as there subsisted an intimate relation between him and them during life, the union is not dissolved by the separation of the two constituent parts of their nature. As the relation extended to their whole persons, to the body as well as to the soul, it is supposed to continue in reference to both. There is no difficulty in conceiving the continuance of the union of the soul, because it is still animated by the Spirit of Christ; but it is not so easy to understand the union of a piece of dead matter, of a heap of dust, of particles scattered hither and thither, to the living Saviour in heaven. Yet the notion is manifestly favoured by the expressions formerly quoted, and, perhaps too, by the assertion in another place, that the bodies of believers are "the temples of the Holy Ghost."‡ If they once belonged to Christ, they do not cease in their new state to be a part of his property. He claims them as his own, because he shed his blood to redeem them: they are a part of his mystical body, the church, which is made up not of separate spirits, but of human beings; and they are therefore objects of his care, at the time when they most seem to be forsaken. It is a wonderful thought, that what to us is so disgusting that we cannot bear to look upon it, what is so worthless that we care not perhaps where it is laid, or to what use it is applied, what is confounded with the common earth, and accounted the vilest of all things, should be precious in the eyes of that great Being who looks upon ten thousand worlds as nothing!

To the bodies of believers, the grave is a place of rest. So far, indeed, as this rest implies exemption from toil, and pain, and weariness, it is equally so to the bodies of the wicked. Both have lain down, like the traveller at the end of his journey, and the hireling when he has fulfilled his day. In calling the grave a place of rest to the righteous, we unconsciously associate with the state of their bodies that of their souls, which are truly at rest in the peaceful abode of heaven; or we anticipate the result, when, awakened as from a long refreshing sleep, they shall rise with renovated life and vigour, to enjoy everlasting felicity.

"Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."* In these words, death is presented to Daniel under the emblem of a state of repose; and, at the same time, he is cheered with the hope of a happier lot, which will succeed at a distant period. Having considered at some length the death of the righteous and its consequences, we are led, in the next place, to speak of their resurrection.

I begin with remarking, That the resurrection of the body is a matter of pure revelation. Reason does not suggest it; or rather, to reason it seems incredible; and to those who have no other teacher, it is unknown, or when proposed, is rejected by them. Two or three passages, indeed have been found in the writings of heathens, from which it appears that some of them had an idea of a resurrection; but their knowledge must have been derived from revelation, incidentally, or in the channel of tradition, and their belief was confined to themselves. With a few exceptions, the wise men among the Gentiles were either ignorant of the resurrection, or derided it. In the dialogue of Minucius Felix which is entitled Octavius, Cæcilius, who personates a heathen, reproaches the Christians with contriving *aniles fabulas, old wives' fables*. "They tell us," he says, "that they shall be reproduced after death and the ashes of the funeral pile; and believe their own lies, so that you might think that they had already revived. O twofold madness! to denounce destruction to the heaven and the stars, which we leave as we found them, but to promise eternity to themselves, when dead and extinguished!" When Paul in Athens spoke of the resurrection of the dead, some of the philosophers mocked.† In the Church of Corinth, there were persons who, influenced by their original opinions, affirmed that there was no resurrection of the dead;‡ and, in the second Epistle to Timothy, mention is made of Hymeneus and Philetus, who affirmed that the resurrection was already past;‖ that is, finding that the doctrine was explicitly taught by the Gospel, and that they could not retain the Christian name if they should flatly deny it, they explained it away, as expressive only of a resurrection from a state of ignorance and sin.

Since the resurrection of the dead has been made known by revelation, it has been attempted to establish it by the principles of reason; and an argument has been founded on the justice of God, which requires, that as men have obeyed or disobeyed him in their whole person, so, in their whole person they should be rewarded or punished. And it does seem agreeable to justice, that the body, which in this life is associated with the soul in all its actions, should share in its future recompense. But, whatever force there may be in this argument to us, who already believe the point which it is intended to prove, there is no reason to think that it would have led any man to the conclusion, who had no other means of arriving at it. Without revelation, our ideas of Divine justice would have been very imperfect. We could not have ascertained exactly what were its demands; nor do I see that reason could have objected if it had been said, that justice would be satisfied with the infliction of such punishment as the soul was capable of enduring in a separate state. The argument ascribed to the

*Gen. iii. 19. †Rev. xiv. 13. 1 Thess. iv. 14.
‡1 Cor. vi. 19.

* Dan. xii. 13. † Acts xvii. 32. ‡1 Cor. xv.
‖2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.

ancient philosopher Phocylides, one of the few who are understood to have entertained the idea of a resurrection, seems to be better: "It is not good that the admirable harmony which appears in the constitution of men, should be entirely dissolved. We hope, therefore, that the remains of the dead will come forth from the earth, and return to the light." What views led him to this observation, I cannot tell; but it may be turned into an argument from the wisdom of God, who it is not to be supposed will destroy a species of creatures, after having been induced by sufficient reasons to create it. Were the body of man to remain for ever in the grave, the human species would be destroyed; for there would be then no specific difference, that we know of, between men and angels, both being pure spirits unconnected with matter. That peculiar race, which united the visible and invisible worlds, was allied to earth by one part of its nature and to heaven by another, would disappear, and a link in the chain of being would be broken. We might conceive God to annihilate a species, in the exercise of his sovereignty, or in the exercise of his justice; but we could not so easily conceive him to change a species, or, in translating the inhabitants of this globe to a higher region, to retain only one half of their original nature, and consign the other to the unconscious elements for ever. What, it might be asked, could be the reason for this change? Why did he give them bodies, and then take them away? I do not know that this argument, as I have now stated it, has been attended to before, nor do I affirm that it has any force. It is, however, fully as convincing as the argument from the justice of God; but it does not amount to demonstration, and, at the best, can afford only a degree of probability.

There are some analogies in the natural world, by which the subject has been illustrated; but they are merely illustrations, and prove nothing. The revival of all things at the return of spring, is one of the most common as well as the most beautiful. Trees, and shrubs, and herbs, and flowers, which seemed to be dead, and some of which lay hidden in the earth like the body in the grave, burst forth with new life, and delight our senses with their verdure and their fragrance. But the analogy fails in the most important point. They were not dead; there was merely a suspension of their functions; but from the body in the grave the vital principle has totally departed, and its very texture is dissolved. To make the similitude perfect, we should see an instance of the reviviscence of a plant, torn from its bed, deprived of its roots, reduced to ashes by fire, or consumed by air and moisture. On such a plant Spring would shed its genial influences in vain.

There is a supposed fact in natural history, which, being credited by the early Christians, and not by them alone, but even by wise men among the Gentiles, was frequently appealed to as a proof or illustration of the resurrection of the body. It is the story of the phœnix, and is thus related in his Epistle to the Corinthians by Clement, the first Christian in whose writings it occurs. "Let us contemplate the wonderful sign which takes place in the eastern regions, namely, in Arabia. It is the bird called the phœnix, and being the only one of its species, it lives five hundred years. When it is about to die, it prepares a place for itself of frankincense and myrrh, and other aromatic substances, and entering into it at the appointed time, expires. The flesh being corrupted, a worm is produced, which, being nourished by the moisture of the dead animal, pushes forth wings, and growing strong carries away the nest containing the bones of its predecessor, and places it upon the altar of the sun in Heliopolis, and then departs. Can it then seem wonderful that the Maker of all things should raise those who have served him in holiness and faith?"

The point which I have been hitherto endeavouring to establish is, that the resurrection of the body is a fact which unassisted reason could not discover, and of which the natural world can furnish only some images or similitudes. It is so clearly revealed in the New Testament, that it is unnecessary to refer to particular passages; and I shall therefore at present mention only a few from the Old Testament, to show that it was known before the advent of our Saviour. The following words of Job have been the subject of much discussion; but the circumstances in which they were spoken, the solemnity of the introduction, and the elevated tone of the language, evidently point to something greater than a temporal deliverance: "Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."* It is plainly taught in these words of Isaiah: "He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord will wipe away tears from off all faces;" and again, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."† I shall add only one passage more, from the prophecies of Daniel. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."‡ A strange notion has been broached, that the Jews were ignorant of a future state, because there is no express mention of it in the law of Moses. But, our Lord has proved it and the resurrection of the body from the words of God prior to the giving of the law, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;"‖ and we see that it is plainly foretold in their subsequent sacred books. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is affirmed, that it was the hope of it which supported the martyrs for the Jewish religion. "And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection."§ While the writer may be understood to refer to all the holy men who laid down their lives for the law, he had probably in his eye the sufferers under Antiochus Epiphanes, and particularly a mother and her seven sons; of whom it is related in the second book of the Maccabees, that they endured the most cruel torments with patience, and died in the assured hope of a glorious immortality. "Thou, like a fury," said one of the sons, "takest us out of this present life, but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life."¶

Reason confirms the dictates of revelation by reminding us, that the power of God is able to execute the purposes of his will. "Why should it seem an incredible thing that God should raise the dead?" is a question which may put to silence all infidel objectors. As the event does not imply a contradiction, it is possible, and may therefore be effected by that power to which no limits can be assigned. He who made all things out of nothing, can unquestionably restore any portion of matter to the form and organization which he gave it at first. If he fashioned the human body out of the dust, it would be absurd to suppose that there is any greater difficulty in raising

* Job xix. 23—27. † Is. xxv. 8. xxvi. 19.
‡ Dan. xii. 2. ‖ Matth. xxii. 32. § Heb. xi. 35.
¶ 2 Mac. vii. 9.

it from the dust again. To hesitate for a moment about the possibility of an event which God has signified his intention to accomplish, because we do not understand how it can be effected, is a proof of atheism, or, at least, of stupidity, for it proceeds upon an assumption, which, to say nothing of its impiety, it unworthy of a being possessed of any portion of reason, that the weakness of creatures is the measure of the strength of the Creator.

A question has been proposed, whether the Scriptures teach a universal resurrection, or the resurrection only of the righteous? I do not know that any in modern times have confined it to the righteous, but some of the followers of Socinus. Dr. Macknight adopted the strange opinion, that the bodies of the wicked will be destroyed in the general conflagration; but he believed that they would be previously raised from the grave.* The notion of a partial resurrection has been triumphantly refuted; but this was an easy task, as there was no occasion for elaborate argumentation, and nothing more was necessary than to appeal to the explicit declarations of Scripture. Some heresies have an air of plausibility, by which they may impose upon the unwary; and a regard to the honour of the truth, and the souls of men, requires that we should enter into a formal confutation of them. But when certain corruptors of the truth have the audacity to give the lie to the testimony of God, delivered in terms which are free from ambiguity, and are the plainest which it is possible to use, it is quite sufficient to return a simple negative to their unfounded affirmations, or to treat them with silent contempt. If Paul had hope towards God, that there would be a resurrection, "both of the just and of the unjust;"† and if our Saviour has told us, that "all that are in their graves shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation;‡ we may surely give ourselves very little concern about what any follower of Socinus may say to the contrary.

The question, whether the dead will be raised with the same bodies which were laid in the grave, or with different bodies, would not have occurred to a plain, simple-minded man, who was disposed implicitly to receive the testimony of God. It has arisen from the propensity of the human mind to speculate about every thing, and to philosophize where we ought to believe. It has been asked at those who assert the resurrection of the same body, whether they mean the body which died, or the body at any former period, as it is known to be in a perpetual flux, and few of the particles which belonged to it in youth remain in old age? It has been asked, whether, as all these particles equally belonged to the individual, they are all to be restored to him, or only a part; and, in the latter supposition, what part? Now, although we cannot return a satisfactory answer to such questions, our ignorance is not a reason why we should entertain any doubt of the identity of the body; because we have received assurances of the fact, and should be content, as we must be in many other cases, with this general knowledge, while the mode and circumstances are enveloped in mystery. The very word, resurrection, and the corresponding term ανασταστς, both signify the rising or standing up of something which had fallen or lain down; and if it is a different body from their present with which men will hereafter be clothed, a word has been chosen by the inspired writers which conveys a fallacious idea. This single argument, I think, is conclusive. The formation of a different body for the separate spirit would not be a resurrection but a creation,—in the secondary sense of the term, if it was formed out of pre-existing materials. In corroboration of this argument, I observe, that the sameness of the body is implied in the reasonings of Paul in the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Some, indeed, have drawn the contrary conclusion from his words: "That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."* But his meaning will be obvious, if you reflect upon his design, which is to show, that the bodies of the saints, of whom alone he is speaking, will undergo a great and glorious change, and will not be the same as they now are in respect of their qualities, as the plant which rises from the earth is different from the bare grain, the homely-looking seed from which it springs. It is a physical fact, that the plant is not different from the seed, as the new bodies are supposed to be from the old; for it is derived from the seed, and contains a part of its substance; and the Apostle himself proceeds upon this idea, when he says, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die;"† plainly supposing, that that which is quickened is the same substance which died; and consequently, that the body of the saints, at the resurrection, is the same body which underwent putrefaction. He expresses his meaning in the clearest manner, when he afterwards contrasts the present and the future state of the body; for he assumes it as a fact, that it is the same material substance which is now corruptible, mean, and weak, but is afterwards to be incorruptible, glorious, and powerful; and he sums up his discourse by saying, "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."‡

It has been said that the resurrection of the same body is not necessary; for, although the new body is not numerically the same, "the body is truly raised, because, what is raised being united to the soul, there will arise in the man thus completed, a consciousness of his identity, by which he will be sensible of the justice of the recompense rendered to him for his deeds." The consciousness of identity, as far as it respects the soul, is never suspended, and remains while it is in a separate state. What, then, is this new consciousness which is to arise when it is again embodied? If it mean any thing, it must mean a consciousness of identity in the whole person, and, consequently, a consciousness of what is not true; for, if the consciousness refers to the soul alone, it does not begin at the resurrection, and the word "arise" is used merely to impose upon us, and to make us believe that this new body, although totally different, will somehow be considered as the same with the former body. With regard to the idea, that this consciousness of identity is sufficient for all the ends of justice, the question is not, whether it is true or false, but whether God our judge will account it sufficient; and if he has declared his intention to raise the same body to be rewarded or punished, speculations about what might have been are not worthy of notice.

Against the resurrection of the same body, it is objected, that the bodies of men often enter into the composition of other substances; that they not only serve for the nutrition of vegetables, and are the food of carnivorous animals, but that they are occasionally devoured by cannibals, and converted into a part of their bodies. It is easy to conceive them to be reclaimed from animals and vegetables; but what shall be done in those cases in which the same particles happen to belong to different men?—Two things are supposed in this objection. First, that all the parti-

* Macknight on the Epistles, 1 Thess. iv. 16.
† Acts xxiv. 15. ‡ John v. 29.

* 1 Cor. xv. 37, 38. † Ib. 36. ‡ Ib. 53.

cles which have ever belonged to an individual will be united in the composition of his future body; and secondly, that a part of the substance of one man may become part of the substance of another. It is evident that, if the first supposition is true, the second is false; and that, if the second is true, the first is false; but we cannot affirm any thing certainly concerning either. The objection is addressed to our ignorance; but the objectors themselves are equally ignorant; and as, on this account, they have no right to advance the objection, so we are under no obligation to put ourselves to the trouble of answering it. It is enough for us to know that God, all-wise and almighty, is able to perform what he has promised.

Some have supposed that there is "a germ or seminal principle in the human body, which is not destroyed by death; and which, at the appointed time, will reproduce the body in a more excellent form than before, through the quickening influence of Divine Power." But, we may ask, Is the human body a vegetable? Does it resemble a plant, which, when its leaves and stem are destroyed, retains life in the root, and will shoot forth again at the return of spring? Will the reproduction of the body, which we have been taught to consider as miraculous, be the result of a natural process? How is this germ or seminal principle preserved, when the body is reduced to ashes by fire, or undergoes a complete dissolution in the grave? Has any person seen it? Does any person understand what it means? Has it any existence but in the region of fancy and conjecture? We have frequently cause to complain that we meet with gratuitous assumptions and unintelligible propositions; and they occur in the writings of the learned, as well as in the conversation of the illiterate. Let no man talk of a germ or seminal principle of the body, till he has first, after patient thinking, assured himself that he affixes a distinct idea to his words. I consider the assertion, that there is such a principle, to be words and nothing more. Besides other absurdities, that is implied in it, that the body is not entirely dead; that there is a part of it, however small, in which life remains; for a dead germ or seed could not reproduce; and how there can be life in any particle of it, after the vital principle has forsaken it, we leave to the authors of this foolish hypothesis to explain. In our progress through the system of Divine truth, our way is impeded, not only by the blunders of vulgar ignorance, but by the unfounded speculations of false wisdom and philosophy.

The resurrection of the dead is the work of God. Yet it is ascribed to Jesus Christ without any inconsistency, because he is a Divine Person, and to him as Mediator the administration of the moral government of the Universe is committed. "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth."* The resurrection will be a preparatory step to the judgment, which will immediately follow, and in which, sentence will be pronounced upon all the individuals of the human race, according to their works. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first."† We do not understand the circumstances mentioned in these words; but, if they refer to the ministry of created beings on this occasion, we are sure that it is not by their agency that the dead will be restored to life. This is a work appropriated to divine power, which only is able to effect it. No voice will raise the dead but the voice of Jesus Christ. The office of angels will be subordinate; and as their presence will add to the grandeur of the scene, so they will be sent to convey the righteous from the earth to the right hand of their Saviour. "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect, from one end of heaven to the other."‡

I have already stated, that there will be a resurrection of all men, good and bad, and that the justice of God seems to require, that as men have served him or sinned against him in the body, so in the body, they should be rewarded or punished. With regard to the wicked, the Scripture contents itself with informing us, that they shall be raised, and afterwards judged and cast into hell. It does not enter into a detailed account of the state and qualities of their bodies. All that we learn is, that they shall rise "to shame and everlasting contempt;" and hence we may probably infer, that their external appearance will be such as is befitting the character of criminals, and will exhibit marks of the curse, by which their whole person is devoted to irretrievable perdition.

In the subsequent part of this lecture, I shall confine your attention to the resurrection of the saints.

I begin with remarking, that there is an intimate connexion between their resurrection, and that of Jesus Christ. The simple re-union of their souls and bodies, is not to be considered as the effect of his mediation, because the same thing will take place with respect to the wicked; and of all opinions none is more absurd than that of certain Divines, who have maintained, that the general resurrection is a privilege which Christ has procured for mankind in general by his death. To the wicked the resurrection is not a privilege, but a curse; it is not the effect of the goodness, but of the avenging justice of God. What the saints owe to his mediation is a happy resurrection, the change of a tremendous evil into an unspeakable blessing. As he died not for himself, but for them, he has taken away the sting of death, or made it cease to be a penal evil to them; and rising in the character of their surety, he secured that they also shall rise, to enjoy the immortal life which is the recompense of his merit. "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."† Death came by the first man, because through his sin, his descendants, to whom its guilt is imputed, are rendered obnoxious to death; and the resurrection of the dead, must therefore come by the second man in a similar way. Through his righteousness imputed to them, they are made heirs of eternal life. It is perhaps on this account, that God is said "to have raised us up together with him, and made us sit together in heavenly places;"‡ words which seem to import, that the resurrection of the saints is past, but which can only mean, that it is infallibly secured by that of Jesus Christ as their Head and Representative.

"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."‖ The first fruits were by the command of God presented to him at a stated season, not only as a token of the gratitude of the Israelites for his bounty, but as an earnest of the approaching harvest. In this sense, he is called the first fruits of the dead. He was the first in order of time, for, although some were restored to life by the Prophets and by himself during his personal ministry, none came out of their graves to return to them no more till after his resurrection; and as he was the first in respect of time, so he was the first in order of succession; all the saints following him, as the harvest followed the presentation of the first fruits of the temple. The interval is long, and the dreary sterility of the grave might justify the thought that the seed committed to it has perished forever. But our hope rests upon his power, which can make the

* John v. 28. † 1 Thess. iv. 16.

* Matt. xxiv. 31. †1 Cor. xv. 21. ‡ Eph. ii. 6. ‖ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

wilderness blossom as the rose; and we wait till heavenly influences descend as the dew of herbs, when the barren soil shall display all the luxuriance of vegetation, and death itself shall teem with life.

Of the change which will take place in the bodies of the saints, Paul speaks in his first Epistle to the Corinthians; but his words are too general to convey a distinct idea of the subject. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."* We may, however, draw from them some conclusions respecting the state of the glorified body.

First, It will be incorruptible and immortal. In the present state, the human body is liable to dissolution, and contains in itself the principles of decay. It is subject to acute and chronic diseases, by which life is suddenly or slowly extinguished; and then the process of putrefaction begins, which terminates in the destruction of its organization, and the separation of its parts. In the future state it will be sound and healthy, and probably be so constituted as not to be naturally capable of disease and waste, while the penal cause of its disorders will no longer exist. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain."† The body will be immortal as the soul. Although things on earth, even the firmest and most solid substances, are wasted away; yet this appears to be the effect of the circumstances in which they are placed,—of the action, for example, of air and moisture. We do not know that all matter experiences decay. We are ignorant of its state beyond our own world; but we have reason to believe that the sun and stars are of the same magnitude, and emit the same splendour, as at the beginning; and can find no difficulty in conceiving any portion of matter to be made, by the will of God, immutable and eternal.

Secondly, The bodies of the saints will be glorious; but in what this glory will consist, we are not able to say. The word, glory, when applied to the body, suggests the idea of brightness or splendour; and in this sense we speak of the glory of the sun and the stars. It may seem to favour this meaning of the term in reference to the present subject, that at the transfiguration of our Lord, his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light;‡ and that when John saw him in Patmos, his face was like the mid-day sun, and his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet as burning brass,‖ and we are told that the bodies of the saints will be fashioned like unto his glorious body.§ It is certain, however, with respect to the latter description, that some parts of it are emblematical; and we therefore cannot consider it as a true representation of the appearance of his body in heaven. We are equally uncertain with regard to the other appearance; because it does not follow, that the form in which our Saviour shewed himself to his disciples, living upon earth, and entertaining the common notion of corporeal glory, is the form which he wears in a state so different from the present. There is no doubt that, in symmetry, and beauty, and dignity, the glorified body will be perfect. It will be finished after the highest pattern in the universe. Man will then be fair as in paradise, and fairer still than in that happy place. Of all the visible works of God, the most exquisite will be those bodies which his own Son has redeemed from death with his precious blood.

Thirdly, The bodies of the saints will be powerful. At present, they are subject to many infirmities; their strength is soon exhausted and they need food, and rest, and cordials, to restore them. In the future state, langour and weariness will be unknown. We have no means of estimating the strength of the glorified body, as we know of no resistance which it will have to overcome; but we may perhaps judge of it from a circumstance which is revealed concerning the righteous in heaven, that they will be uninterruptedly engaged in the service of God. Constant employment will cause no fatigue, and sleep will not be necessary to renovate their powers. It is plain, therefore, that their bodies will possess a degree of vigour and activity of which we can form no conception.

Lastly, The bodies of the saints will be spiritual. It is a remark which must occur to every person, that a spiritual body is an apparent contradiction; and we are therefore under the necessity of understanding the word, spiritual, in an unusual sense. It seems to signify refined, in opposition to the grossness of the present body, composed, as it is, of flesh, blood, and bones; and to this meaning we are led by the following words, which the Apostle subjoins as an explanation of his account of the glorified body, or as the reason of the change which it will undergo; "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither can corruption inherit incorruption."* Corruption is the present corruptible body, which, it is intimated, remaining as it is, or retaining its present constitution, cannot become incorruptible. It must undergo a new modification; in consequence of which, although still material, it will be very different from what it now is. We see matter existing in different states, composing a metal, and composing a sunbeam; and hence it is easy to conceive the power of God so to refine the bodies of the saints, that they may be comparatively said to be spiritual. How pure, I had almost said etherial, must those bodies be, which will need neither food nor rest, and will never experience pain or fatigue! It would be folly and presumption to speculate upon a subject of which we have so little information; but it is evident that certain parts of the body will no longer be necessary, those, for example, which serve for the concoction and digestion of our food; and if the future body is not to be sustained by other substances, the use of the blood which circulates through the veins and arteries, to convey nourishment to every part, will be superseded. I might carry this reasoning farther; but after all we could arrive at no certain conclusion: and why should we seek to know what the Scriptures have concealed?

Some have entertained the idea that, before the general resurrection, there will be a partial resurrection of the saints, or of the martyrs; and found it upon the following words; "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."† This passage has given rise to the notion of the personal reign of Christ upon the earth; and those by whom it has been espoused are called Millenarians. It is, however, too obscure to be made the foundation of a positive opinion. It probably refers to a spiritual resurrection,—a resurrection of the cause for which the martyrs suffered: which will then be triumphant; and while their names will be held in honor, persons of the same spirit will arise and reign with Christ, in the undisturbed enjoyment of religion

* Cor. xv. 42.—44. † Rev. xxi. 4. ‡ Matth. xvii. 2.
‖ Rev. i. 14—16. § Phil. iii. 21.

* 1 Cor. xv. 50. † Rev. xx. 4, 5.

and its privileges, Satan being bound, and his agents reduced to inactivity and silence. Some such interpretation is favoured by this circumstance, that John speaks not of the bodies, but of the souls of those who had been slain. No wise man would oppose a vision, in which the description is professedly figurative, to the plain declaration of Scripture, that the resurrection will take place at the second coming of Christ. It is worthy of attention that, when speaking of that event, Paul makes mention of two classes of persons, the dead in the grave, and those who will be alive; and says concerning the latter, that they shall be changed, or undergo the same change with those who are raised. But, if some of the saints had been previously raised, such a change would not be necessary to them; and we may therefore conclude that there will be no persons of this description among the last generation of mankind.

"Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."* The law of mortality admits of exceptions, and an entire generation will be exempted from its operation. I formerly showed you that death is not necessary to the complete sanctification of the soul; although, in the case of those who die, that is the period when it is completed. The bodies of those who are alive when Christ comes, will be as unfit for the heavenly state as the bodies lying in the grave, and will therefore undergo the same change; with this difference only, that there will be no recomposition, but a sudden transformation of them. This moment, they will be weary, hungry, faint, diseased, and racked with pain; the next, they will be invested with the glories of immortality. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."†. But, in the first place, as we are informed, the dead saints shall be raised. What a wonderful sight! mortals changed into immortals! the earth and the sea yielding up their treasures, and men mingling with angels who have descended to convey them to their own blessed abodes! "Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord."‡

LECTURE LXXXIII.

ON THE FINAL STATE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

The Final Judgment of the Saints.—Their Acquittal and Entrance into Heaven.—Their Supreme Felicity: its Nature and Sources.

The resurrection of the dead will be followed by the general judgment, in which small and great shall stand before God to receive their final sentence. There will be a visible appearance of Jesus Christ, who will come with great power and glory, and will erect his throne in the clouds. His ministers will be the angels, who will be sent forth to gather together his elect from all parts of the earth in which they are dwelling, or in which their bodies are deposited. Saints and sinners are now mingled together in the common offices of life, and are connected by various ties; but then they will be parted forever. "Before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left."‖ These words are commonly understood in a literal sense, as if the places mentioned would be respectively occupied by the two opposite classes of mankind; but perhaps a little reflection will show us that this interpretation cannot be admitted, and does not accord with our other conceptions of the grand assize. If the Son of Man is to sit on his throne in the clouds, and the saints are to be caught up to meet him in the air, the position of the two parties on the right and left hand cannot be so easily imagined, and it may be presumed to be a figurative description. The place at the right hand, which will be assigned to the righteous, may signify the station of honour which they will occupy; for this is the general idea which that situation suggests in Scripture, particularly when our Saviour himself is said to sit at the right hand of his Father, who has no right hand, but has exalted him "far above all principalities and powers."

In the figurative description of the transactions of the last day, in the Revelation of John, we are informed that "the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life."* It is out of this book that the saints will be judged, whether we understand by it the Gospel, or the divine decree by which they were appointed to salvation. To the law, as the rule of justification and condemnation, they are not amenable; for they have been delivered from it by Jesus Christ, and when they believed in him, they declared that they ceased to seek righteousness by it. The question, therefore, will not be, whether they have fulfilled or transgressed this law; but, whether they possess the precious faith which God has appointed to be the only means of obtaining salvation. No inquiry will be necessary for the satisfaction of the Judge, who knows their hearts, and by his grace produced all the good which will be found in them; but it will be necessary for the great design of the general judgment, which is, the manifestation of his righteousness in the final allotment of the human race. To convince all that it is not by an arbitrary decision that heaven is assigned to them in preference to others, and that the sentence is founded in reasons which accord with the rectitude of Divine administration, evidence will be exhibited of the validity of their title; and this evidence will be furnished by their works: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."† It is evident to every person who understands his Bible, that the works of the saints are here mentioned, not as the foundation, but as the evidence of their title. If men are not justified by works, but by faith; if they are not saved by their merit, but by grace; it is certain, that the final sentence can refer to their works only as proofs, to all who shall witness the decision, that they are the persons to whom the promise of eternal life belongs, or believers, whose faith wrought by love and thus demonstrated its genuineness.

It appears that the good works of the saints will be mentioned in the judgment, and for what purpose they will be produced. But will any mention be made of their sins? This is a question about which those who have deemed it worthy of attention are divided in sentiment. It has been said by such as maintain that they will not be mentioned, that there is no reference to them in the account which our Lord gives of the general judgment, in the Gospel of Matthew; that the remission of them is expressed in such terms as imply that they are henceforth to be forever concealed, for they are "cast into the depths of the sea, and are to

* 1 Cor. xv. 51. † Ib. 52. ‡ Thess. iv. 17.
‖ Matth. xxv. 32, 33.

* Rev. xx. 12. † Matth. xxv. 34—36.

be remembered no more;" that it is not consonant to the character of the Judge, who is also the propitiation for their sins, to suppose that he will bring them to light in a manner so public; and that, notwithstanding their full acquittal, we could not conceive the saints not to be affected with shame, if their crimes, the recollection of which has often made them blush and hang down their heads, were exposed to the view of the universe. But, in opposition to these arguments, it is said that, according to Scripture, "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil;"* that justice seems to require that there should be an impartial review of the conduct of each individual; that to recall the memory of the sins of the saints, will display the virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, and the riches of the grace of God, through which they have been pardoned; that, in many cases, the sins of the wicked could not be published without the publication of theirs, as they were associated in the same deeds; that some of them are already made public in the Scriptures, and are held up as a spectacle to all generations; and that no feeling of shame would be excited, because God has fully remitted their trespasses, and they glory in the righteousness of Christ, with which they are adorned.

There is some force in the arguments on both sides, and it is not easy to determine which preponderates; but we need not perplex ourselves about the matter, as in truth the question is more curious than profitable, and nothing will be gained or lost by a decision in either way.

But, whether the particular sins of the saints will or will not be mentioned in the judgment, there can be no doubt that there will be a general reference to them. Glorious as their appearance will be, it will be understood that they were once sinners, who deserved to be placed on the left hand of the Judge, but were pardoned through Divine mercy; and it will be an important part of the transactions of the last day, to publish the sentence of acquittal in the ears of angels and men. If their title to the favour of God is often a subject of doubt to themselves amidst the darkness of the present state, their fears are dispelled, either before they die, or immediately after their spirits enter into the presence of God. But by others it is disputed, and the grounds on which it rests are accounted imaginary, while their faith is derided as a foolish presumptuous fancy, and the doctrine of imputed righteousness is pronounced to be the dream of a shadow. The decision of the last day will put an end for ever to these suspicions and accusations. Who shall condemn those whom God has justified? There are, besides, many calumnious charges advanced against the people of God, through ignorance or malice, which, indeed are in this case very nearly allied; for although they may sometimes originate in mistake, yet there is a disposition on the part of the ungodly to adopt the charges, from prejudice against religion, and a wish to hold up to contempt and detestation men whose persons they hate, because they hate their principles. We know what were the slanders of the Jews and Gentiles against the Christians in the primitive times; it appears from history, that these have been repeated, or new ones have been invented in succeeding ages; and the same hostility subsists, and discovers itself in the opprobrious names with which the genuine disciples of Jesus are branded. Precisians, puritans, methodists, enthusiasts, fanatics, hypocrites, are some of the terms of contempt in the world's copious vocabulary; and they are applied to them because they have imbibed the spirit, and act under the influence, of the religion which even their enemies profess to respect. But the final sentence will vindicate the character of the righteous, and make the infamy light upon those with whom it originated. Then shall these words be fulfilled in all their extent: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."*

The saints having been openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, will make their triumphant entry into the place destined for their reception: "These shall go away into everlasting life." The place is called heaven, by which we understand that region of the universe in which angels and the spirits of the just now dwell, and all the righteous shall be finally assembled. Where it is situated, we do not know. We speak of it as above us; but the phrase is used in conformity to a notion founded upon the appearance of the visible heavens. What is above us at this moment, will be beneath us twelve hours hence, in consequence of the revolution of the earth; and what is beneath us, seems to be above to those who are on the opposite side of the globe. Our ideas of its situation are therefore vague; and there is only one thing, which it seems warrantable to conclude, that it lies beyond the limits of the visible creation; for Jesus Christ, who is now in it, is said to have ascended "above all heavens," that is, above the aerial and starry heavens, according to the Jewish division of the superior regions. That it is a place, we have no reason to doubt, and it is an imaginary refinement to consider it only as a state. It is undeniable that God can make any place heaven by there revealing himself, and communicating the fulness of his love; but this is nothing to the purpose. Our business is not with speculations about his power, but with the declarations of his word; and Scripture uniformly supposes that there is a particular place, which is appointed to be the final abode of the righteous. There have been curious and idle discussions respecting the *ubi*† of Spirits, and whether, as they are not material, and cannot like body be confined within definite limits, places can be predicated of them; but there is no occasion at present to perplex ourselves with the arguments on either side, because the saints in the future state will be clothed with a material frame. It must be a material place which is inhabited by our blessed Saviour, and Enoch, and Elijah, and the saints who came out of their graves after the resurrection of Christ, and will be inhabited hereafter by the thousands and millions whom he will raise to life at his second coming.

Concerning the nature of the place we can form no conjectures. The descriptions of it are undoubtedly figurative. Some parts of our earth display scenes of astonishing grandeur and consummate beauty; but heaven will be inconceivably superior to what the earth was, even before its loveliness had been impaired by the curse. It seems reasonable to suppose that it will be totally different from the earth, because the beings who inhabit it, although men, will be entirely changed in respect of the constitution of their bodies. We are indeed told in the book of Revelation, that a river flows in it, and that trees grow upon its banks;‡ but who does not perceive, that the subject would be degraded by a literal interpretation, and that the ideas suggested are those of beauty, refreshment, and abundance? It is presented to us under the image of a city of pure gold, the foundation and gates of which are composed of precious stones.‖ "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their

* Ecc. xii. 14.

* Isa. liv. 17. † Locality. ‡ Rev. xxii. 1, 2. ‖ Ib. xxi. 19, 21.

glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there."* All that we can say is, that in heaven there will be visible tokens of the presence of God. Upon earth he manifests himself, not only by impressions upon the minds of his intelligent creatures, but by displays of his perfections in the splendour of the heavens, and the various processes which are going on above us and around us. We may believe, therefore, that he will manifest himself in heaven, both by a secret intercourse with the souls of the saints, and by such external signs as will show that he is near, and that this is his temple and his palace. Who can conceive the majesty and glory of the place which he has chosen for his peculiar residence. Here all the magnificence and beauty, which we admire in the universe, will be united with beauty and magnificence of which we can form no idea. It will be the noblest work of his almighty hand.

It has been asked, whether, in this blessed abode, the saints will know one another? One should think that the question was unnecessary, as the answer naturally presents itself to every man's mind; and it could only have occurred to some dreaming Theologian, who in his airy speculations, has soared far beyond the sphere of reason and common sense. Who can doubt whether the saints will know one another? What reason can be given why they should not? Would it be any part of their perfection to have all their former ideas obliterated, and to meet as strangers in the other world? Would it give us a more favourable notion of the assembly in heaven, to suppose it to consist of a multitude of unknown individuals, who never hold communication with each other; or by some inexplicable restraint are prevented, amidst an intimate intercourse, from making mutual discoveries? Or have they forgotten what they themselves were, so that they cannot reveal it to their associates? What would be gained by this ignorance no man can tell; but we can tell what would be lost by it. They would lose all the happiness of meeting again on the peaceful shore, those from whom they were separated by the storms of life; of seeing among the trophies of Divine grace, many of whom they had despaired, and for whose sakes they had gone down with sorrow to the grave; of knowing the good which they had been honoured to do, and being surrounded with the individuals who had been saved by means of their prayers, and instructions, and labours. How could those whom he had been the instrument of converting, and building up in the holy faith, be to the minister of the gospel a crown of joy and rejoicing in the day of the Lord, if he did not recognize them when standing at his side? The saints will be free from the turbulence of passion, but their innocent affections will remain; and could they spend eternal ages without asking, Are our children here? Are our still dearer relatives here? Have our friends, with whom we took sweet counsel together, found their way to this country, to which we travelled in company till death parted us? And, if to these questions no answer could be returned, would they be happy?

The same mode of thinking which suggested this question, has led to another strange notion of heaven, as if it would be a state of solitary enjoyment. It has been glossed over, too, with the appearance of piety; and it has been said, that the saints will be so absorbed in the contemplation and enjoyment of God, that they will not need the society of others, and will be insensible to their presence. But, while we acknowledge that God alone is sufficient to the happiness of his creatures, and cordially concur in the sentiment that he is the chief good, we must not permit ourselves to be carried away by imposing sounds, and follow even piety in its fanciful wanderings. What some mystic, or some good but enthusiastic man may have said, is nothing to us, whose ideas of future and invisible things should rest on a more solid foundation. The question is, what kind of heaven has God promised to his people, and what kind of heaven is suitable to the nature of man? With respect to the latter question, I remark, that, although the present relations among mankind, of father and son, husband and wife, which are dissolved at death, will not be renewed, yet the general relation of a common descent and a common nature, strengthened by the relation arising from a common redemption, will remain; and the love, too, will remain which is implied in those relations, and leads to the performance of their duties. Human nature will be purified and exalted, but will not be essentially changed. Without such a change, however, we could not conceive its present tendency to union and fellowship with others to cease. Unless man should become a totally different being, he could not be perfectly happy in absolute solitude. It is true, indeed, that, according to the hypothesis, all his desires will be concentrated upon his Maker; but before we can admit this assumption, we must be assured that his instinctive desire for communion with his equals will be extinguished, or in other words, that he will receive a new constitution. If love to his fellow-men should remain, it would, according to the hypothesis be superfluous and useless; a power preserved but never to be exercised. What idea can any person form of the family of heaven, consisting of insulated individuals, of brothers connected in the most intimate bonds, but holding no correspondence? With regard to the other part of the question, which relates to the heaven which God has promised to his people; you know that it is positively represented as a state of society. And how could it enter into any sound mind to conceive of it otherwise? Are not its inhabitants the identical persons, who were congregated into one body upon earth, and united in the same faith, and love, and worship; and why, when they are assembled again in the celestial sanctuary, should they be supposed immediately to separate, that each may dwell in his own recess, through an eternal duration, like the solitaries of the desert? It is not thus that revelation describes the world to come. "In my Father's house are many mansions."* What a wild imagination must it be which would suppose that those mansions are to be tenanted by individuals living in a state of seclusion from the family? No; the natural suggestion is, that heaven is furnished with every accommodation; that there all those comforts will be found which we usually enjoy in a house—rest, peace, society, and friendship; that it is the place of final meeting to the children of God, as the members of a human family, who were separated during the day, and scattered abroad in pursuit of their respective employments, assemble in the evening in their common habitation. In the revelation of John, they are represented as "standing" before the throne; but that we may not imagine that they stand there as units composing the aggregate number, without any other tie but juxtaposition, they are farther represented as engaged in the same service of adoration and thanksgiving. It is not the song of each man for himself, but the song of the multitude of the redeemed, which will be heard in the celestial temple. "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation unto our

* Rev. xxi. 23—25.

* John xiv. 2,

God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."* There, they will meet, and rejoice, who upon earth went to the house of God in company; and there, they will meet who never met before, and will hail one another as brethren.

Praise is represented to be the employment of the saints in heaven; and who can doubt that the representation is just! Every individual will feel his infinite obligations to Divine grace, and will experience ineffable delight in expressing them. Whether there will be vocal praise in heaven, cannot be ascertained from the figurative descriptions of it; but that it will be vocal does not seem improbable, as the saints having bodies, may be conceived to have also organs of speech. Yet, on reflection it cannot be supposed, that praise will be their only and perpetual exercise. They will serve God day and night in his temple; but there are other ways in which this service may be performed. They will have minds to contemplate, as well as hearts to love him; and why may we not presume that a portion of their happy existence will be devoted to the survey of the glorious manifestations of his attributes, and the review of his wonderful works? They will be surrounded with their redeemed brethren; and will they not enter into conversation with them upon subjects in which they are all equally interested? Will they not listen with delight to one another's history, and feel their hearts glow with admiration and love, while in every new tale there are new displays of Divine wisdom and goodness? But we speak as children do of the actions of men, and with still less knowledge. We are ignorant whether language will be used in heaven as the vehicle of thought, or some new medium of communication will be established. We understand still less the manner in which intercourse will be maintained between men who have bodily senses and organs, and angels who are incorporeal beings. But one thing we know, that angels and men will be united in one holy society, and will dwell together in perfect friendship, loving one another, receiving and communicating happiness.

But the felicity of the saints in the heavenly world, will not arise solely from the nature of the place which they inhabit, and from the company with which they are associated. As the chief end of man is the glory of God, so his supreme happiness consists in the enjoyment of him. This is the judgment of all regenerated men; and heaven is the object of their hope, because in that place their desires for his presence and the full communication of his love, will be gratified. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth whom I desire besides thee."†

Our Saviour pronounces the pure in heart to be blessed, "for they shall see God."‡ There is only an apparent contradiction between his words and those of Paul, who says of the blessed and only Potentate, that "no man hath seen, or can see him;"‖ for the one speaks of mental, and the other of corporeal vision. As God is a spiritual being, he has never been seen by mortal eyes; the appearances of him which are mentioned in Scripture having been symbols and sensible forms assumed for a time. For the same reason, no man will see him, even in the future state; for it should be remembered that, although the bodies of the saints will be highly refined, it is physically impossible that a spirit should be perceived by material organs. Jesus Christ will be seen, because he is clothed with human nature; but the Father dwells amidst inaccessible light. It is not inconsistent with what is now stated, to suppose, a visible manifestation of his glory, similar to the symbol which appeared in the most holy place, or the representation made to Moses, when the Lord passed by him, and proclaimed his name; because, this would not be God himself, but only a sign of his presence.

The saints will see God with their minds, or attain knowledge clear and comprehensive, when compared with the obscure and imperfect knowledge which they at present derive from his works and his word. "Now," says Paul, "we know in part, and prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."* Strong as this language is, it must not be understood of an adequate knowledge; for an infinite being can be comprehended only by an infinite understanding. The knowledge of the future state will be comparatively perfect, free from doubts and errors, and much more extensive than it is at present possible to acquire. Here, our progress is slow, and impeded by obstacles. There, knowledge will be infused into the mind without the operose process of instruction and inquiry. Here, our views are limited, and we see only the skirts of his glory; there, the revelation will be as ample as our finite faculties will permit. What the saints already know, will shine with new light, and present itself to their minds with an evidence and a satisfaction which they never formerly experienced; and many things will be disclosed to them, which it had not entered into their hearts to conceive: mysteries will be explained, difficulties will be solved, and excellencies will rise to view in the Divine nature, of which no vestige was discoverable in his works. How glorious will he appear, when every veil is removed, and he is contemplated in the fulness of his attributes! The sight will be transporting, and will excite the highest admiration and joy.

As the Almighty cannot be sought out to perfection by any finite mind, we do not conceive the knowledge of the saints in heaven to be stationary. It is possible, indeed, that although it is now progressive, it may arrive at a point beyond which it is destined not to proceed; at least, we could not prove this supposition to be absurd. The soul might acquire, on its first entrance into heaven, or on its re-union to the body at the last day, all the knowledge of which it was capable; and this being sufficient for its happiness, there might be no further expansion of its faculties. But we naturally judge of the future state by the present; and finding that the soul now advances from step to step, we are led to anticipate its perpetual progression. There is no doubt that the will of the Creator can indefinitely enlarge its powers, and that, in the infinitude of his nature, there will be new discoveries to be made for ever and ever. In the course of an eternal duration, all the wonders of creation may be surveyed, however wide its extent, and however numerous its parts; but He, in comparison of whom it is as nothing, can never be fully understood.

The knowledge of God in the future state will be accompanied with love; for it is impossible to contemplate infinite excellence without loving it, without loving it intensely and supremely. In this world, the saints prefer God to their chief joy; and there are seasons when their hearts go out to him with an ardour which no created object can excite, with vehement desire for the closest union and the most intimate fellowship. But this flame will glow more ardently in the pure atmosphere of heaven. Here, love struggles with the infirmity of the flesh, the reluctance of corrupt nature, the operations of selfishness, the opposing influence of visible things, by which the senses and the imagination are so powerfully affected; but there, free and unconfined, it will be concentrated upon its object

* Rev. vii. 9, 10. † Ps. lxxiii. 25. ‡ Matth. v. 8.
‖ 1 Tim. vi. 15.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 9—12.

with ineffable delight. Brought back from his wanderings into the immediate presence of his Father, man will indeed love him with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. The fervour of his affection will never abate, nor will any thing occur to suspend it, or to turn it into a different channel. God will always maintain the pre-eminence, and appear infinitely greater and better than all other beings; and his love to other beings will be in perfect harmony with supreme love to God, will flow from this exalted source and will be attracted by his image, as impressed upon them in all its loveliness and glory. Some ancient philosophers imagined, that, after death, the souls of men were absorbed by the Divine essence, from which they had originally emanated; and mystics have talked of being identified with God, and deified in him. These are the dreams of ignorance, and the ravings of insanity. But there will be a union of the most intimate kind between God and the soul in the future state; such a union as is effected by the purest and most active mutual love; and the saints will be one with him in a higher sense than we are able to conceive. There will not be a momentary opposition of desires and interests. They will rejoice in God as he is, and every power will be devoted to him alone. Upon him their thoughts will be constantly fixed, and in communion with him their never-failing joy will consist.

"Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease: whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away."* But love never fails. It is adapted to every condition of our nature, and constitutes its moral perfection. "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three: but the greatest of these is love."† In the world to come, faith will be unnecessary, because its object is seen; and hope because its object is possessed. Faith will terminate in vision, and hope, in enjoyment; but love will remain, and join all hearts in one.

From the observations already made, the happiness of the saints in the celestial regions is unquestionable; but for a more full illustration of it, we may consider that it will arise from the absence of all the causes of pain and sorrow, to the operation of which they are at present exposed; from the presence of the highest possible good, and from the certainty of the perpetual possession of it.

"There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."‡ Sin and suffering are connected as cause and effect. But all the inhabitants of heaven will be sinless, and consequently will no longer be subjected to those sufferings which are now the just punishment or chastisements of their offences, and are necessary to check their wayward dispositions, and to awaken them to repentance. There will be no disease, or pain of body, no anxiety of mind, no fear, no regret, no disappointment, no unsatisfied wishes, no restlessness and discontent, no seasons of melancholy and depression, no broken friendships, no envy and jealousy, no distressing sympathies, no separation from those whom we love. Affliction, when it now passes over the mind, sometimes makes deep furrows, which time does not erase. But there will be no trace of past sorrows in the heart of the saints; no wounds still bleeding, or so slightly healed that a touch opens them again. Remembering all the evils which befell them in this sublunary state, all the sad scenes which they witnessed, all the losses which they sustained, all the agonies which they endured, their minds will be smooth and placid as the bosom of a lake when not an air breathes upon it. Reflection upon the past will serve only to heighten the contrast, and to give them a more lively feeling of their present enjoyments. Who can conceive the calm of the heavenly regions, where no tempest blows, and the sound of lamentation is never heard; where no qualms of conscience are felt, and not a transient thought disturbs the serenity of the soul; where every emotion and every reflection is delightful, and all within and without is bliss! They to whom death made this world a blank, and who went down into the grave mourning because they were bereaved, mourn no more, having found those whom they bewailed, or far better friends. They have no will but the will of God; and those whom he does not love, have ceased to be the objects of their regard. "God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."*

But this is not the sole cause of their felicity. They are not only exempt from all evil, but are put in possession of the greatest possible good; and the good is not the perfection of their own nature, or the resources of their enlightened and holy minds, but God himself, who is their everlasting reward. The soul having wandered from him, finds no rest upon earth; nor would it find it in heaven, if he were not there. The happiness of man in paradise, was the favour of his Maker; and this alone will be his happiness when he is recovered from the effects of the fall. How could he be happy in a state of separation from God? Can a tree live and flourish, when cut off from all communication with the elements which are appointed to nourish it? The rational creation, abandoned by him, would wither and die; like the vegetable creation, when the rain and dew of heaven are withheld. The wicked will be miserable, not so much on account of the place to which they are consigned,—for the Divine favour could change a prison into a palace,—as because they will see God afar off, being banished from his gracious presence, and separated from him by an impassable gulf. It is the presence of God which makes heaven, the asylum of the saints, the seat of perfect joy. There they see him as he is, and hold communion with him, intimate, uninterrupted, and everlasting. Surely he who made the soul of man has access to it, and is able to impress such a sense of his love as will fill it with ineffable satisfaction. The pleasure which we at present experience from pious meditation, or from the contemplation of nature, and the participations of the blessings which it supplies, is referrible to him as its Author; and shows us that he can make the faculties of our souls, and the organs of our bodies, vehicles of bliss. When he shall no longer withhold his hand, but pour out upon the objects of his favour blessings in profusion, their most ample desires will be gratified, and their highest expectations surpassed. If the saints upon earth triumph, because they can say, "The Lord is the portion of our inheritance;"† how much greater will be their exultation, when they know the full value of their portion, the boundless extent of their inheritance! God himself will be their God. He who is all fair and all good, to whom all perfection belongs, and of whose transcendent excellence this glorious universe is only a shadow,—he will be theirs, and will bless them for ever; he will be all in all, around them and within them, the light of their understandings, the joy of their hearts, the object of their perpetual praise.

Let it be observed once more, that this felicity will be heightened by the knowledge that it is everlasting. In heaven there is no apprehension of evil, which disturbs our best hours upon earth, and is excited partly by the suggestions of conscience, and partly by our experience of the vicissitudes of human affairs. Here we ought to rejoice with trembling; and often in our most cheerful moments we are visited with the unwelcome forebodings of a change. Who can say without

* 1 Cor. xiii. 8. † Ib. 13. ‡ Rev. xxi. 4.

* Rev. xxi. 4. † Psalm xvi. 5.

presumption, "Tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant?" The joys of religion are equally subject to mutation as those of a temporal nature; either because the saints are not at all times disposed to receive them, and by the unhappy influence of unbelief they are excluded from their souls; or, because God is pleased to suspend them for the trial of their faith and the chastisement of their sins. The state of heaven is totally different. The duration of all created beings is progressive, and is made up of moments following each other in perpetual succession; but that of the saints will bring no change of circumstances, and may be compared to the duration of the sun and the stars, which, from age to age, are fixed in the same point of space, and shine with undiminished splendour. Eternity will then have commenced, which, as it flows on, carries all things along in a uniform uninterrupted stream of bliss or wo. The very possibility of an end would mar the felicity of the righteous. It would be suspended while the question was asked, Will our joy last for ever? and the doubt implied in that question would make fear pass over the mind as the shadow of a cloud, and dim the lustre of the surrounding scenery. Still more fatal would be the effect, if there were positive ground to suspect that their joy would come to an end. The idea of annihilation, from which nature recoils, would be doubly terrible. Who could bear the thought of losing life in its highest perfection; of closing his eyes on this transcendent glory to behold it no more; of sinking into eternal insensibility after ages of rapturous bliss? But it is an eternal redemption of which Jesus Christ is the Author. The last change which his followers experience is death; or, if you will, the resurrection, when the separate spirits will be again embodied. They then enter upon a career which will never be finished. Ages will run on more rapidly than hours among mortals: but thousands of ages will take nothing from their felicity. God has made them by his gift, what he himself is in his own nature; and of them, as well as of him, it may be said, that their years shall have no end. "There is no night there." "The sun shall no more light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. The sun shall no more go down; neither shall the moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."*

Whether there will be different degrees of glory in heaven, is a question more curious than useful. Those who adopt the negative allege a variety of reasons,—as, that all the saints are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and being equal in this respect, have a title to an equal reward; that they all stand in the same relation to God, as his children are all the first-born, and will therefore receive the same inheritance; that it would seem an imperfection, if one of them had less glory than another, and the former might conceive something better than he actually possessed, and be disturbed by an anxious desire for it; that our Saviour has promised to all a kingdom, and has said that they shall all shine forth as the sun; and that, while we speak of a difference among them, we use words to which no distinct meaning can be annexed, as it is granted that all will be perfect. Those who adopt the positive side of the question, appeal to the different degrees of grace in this world, from which they infer that there will be different degrees of glory in the next. They grant that all saints will be perfectly happy, but compare them to vessels of different sizes, which are all full, although some contain a greater quantity than others; and they support themselves by several passages of Scripture, as the parable of the talents,* in which the servants are recompensed according to their diligence; the declaration of Paul, that "he who soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully;"† and of Daniel, that "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."‡ With respect to the last passage, the supposed difference in the degree of splendour must be considered as imaginary, till it is shown what is meant by the "brightness of the firmament," and that it is inferior to the brightness of the stars; and till it be proved that something more is intended, than simply to convey, by a variety of phrase, the general idea of glory. The passage in the Epistle to the Corinthians, which says that one star differs "from another in glory,"‖ has been also quoted in favour of this opinion, by those who attended to the sound, without thinking of the sense. Any intelligent person who reads the passage, will perceive that the Apostle is speaking of a totally different subject,—the difference between the present and the future bodies of the saints; and is illustrating it by the different appearances which matter assumes in the plastic hands of the Almighty.

It is of no consequence what view you take of the question; and to discuss it either here or elsewhere, would serve no valuable purpose. The prize proposed to all is of incalculable value, and is worthy of the highest efforts which are made to obtain it. Whether the final allotment of the saints shall be equal or unequal, they will all be content, and will all rejoice with joy unspeakable.

* Is. lx. 19, 20.

LECTURE LXXXIV.

ON THE EXTERNAL MEANS OF GRACE.—THE WORD OF GOD.

External Means of Grace Necessary to all but Infants.—The Word of God the Earliest and Principal Means.—Division of the Word into the Law and the Gospel.—Different Senses of the term Gospel.—Its Proper Meaning as Distinguished from the Law.—The Gospel not a New Law of Grace.—Its Efficacy as a Means.

In the preceding lectures, we have surveyed the scheme of redemption in its contrivance, its execution, and its application. Originating in the love of God before the world began, it was carried into effect by the mission and death of his Son; and its blessings are communicated to us by the agency of his Spirit. In this wonderful economy all the persons of the Godhead are concerned, and each performs his appropriate part. It is the work of God alone; and, in one view, resembles the creation of the universe, in which he had no assistant, and accomplished all things by the immediate exertion of his power. But in another view, it may be compared to the work of providence, in which he is the great Agent, but his designs are carried on by the instrumentality of means; by second causes, physical and moral; by the laws of gravitation, and motion, and light; by the activity of men, and the ministry of angels.

In considering the external means which he employs for the salvation of those whom his Son died to redeem, we must direct our attention in the first place to his Word, in which his will is revealed, and by which the intellectual and moral powers of man are influenced in subservience to his purpose; for God deals with him in religion as a rational being. The effect must be ascribed to his power, acting upon the soul in a manner

* Matth. xxv. 15. † 2 Cor. ix. 6. ‡ Dan. xii. 3
‖ 1 Cor. xv. 41.

unknown to us: but in ordinary cases it does not operate immediately. I say in ordinary cases, because we must except from this rule infants, who being born in sin, need to be regenerated as well as adults, but are not the proper subjects of that process by which the latter are renewed. Of the change which they undergo we can form no idea, as it is not accompanied with any external effects by which it might be distinguished, not even by a new train of thoughts, and volitions, and affections, of which they are incapable; but whatever it is, it is produced without means, by the direct agency of the Spirit. In this case means are excluded, because they cannot be used; for infants, not being yet moral agents, are not the proper subjects of conviction, illumination, and conversion, in the established sense of the terms. In the economy of grace, as well as in that of nature, divine wisdom connects variety with regularity, and changes its modes of procedure according to circumstances; being equally wonderful in deviating from its general laws as in adhering to them.

The exclusion of means, as far as we know, is confined to infants. We have no reason to think that men are sometimes illuminated by inspiration, and that good impressions are made upon their minds independently of any external cause. It has been supposed, indeed, that God may make known his will, and communicate the benefits of redemption to pious heathens, without his word and ordinances. Who those heathens are that may be called pious, without an abuse of the term, I do not understand; nor could any man, whose notions of piety were formed upon Scripture and sound reason, ever find them out; and till it is proved that there are such persons, we may save ourselves the trouble of inquiring how they will be disposed of; but every thing that is said concerning the possibility of a revelation to them, without the word, written or preached, is a gratuitous assumption, and besides, appears to be at variance with revelation itself: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* These words comprehend all that we are authorized to believe on this subject; that salvation is connected in the Divine constitution with the means of grace; and that, without these, the end is not to be expected. If God ever sets aside this constitution in particular cases, he has not told us of it; and to affirm that he does so, is downright presumption.

From the beginning, the application of redemption has been conducted by external means, or by the revelation of the will of God, and ordinances founded upon that revelation. Immediately after the fall, God was pleased to make known his purpose of grace to our first parents not by a direct address, but by conveying a notice of it in the threatening pronounced upon the serpent who had deceived them. As the threatening, while it foreboded evil to him, betokened good to them, it had in this respect the nature of a promise, and has therefore been so called. It is not to be supposed, however, that this is all the information which was given them concerning the Redeemer. Something more explicit and ample was necessary to relieve their minds from the fears of guilt, and to direct them in the new system of worship adapted to their circumstances; of which sacrifices were an important part. Of the additional intimations which might be made to the patriarchs, the Scriptures have given only a partial account; but partly by tradition, and partly by occasional communications, the knowledge of Divine mercy, and the future Saviour, was maintained till the days of Moses, who flourished fifteen hundred years before the Christian era. But although, between him and Adam, there was a long interval of two thousand and five hundred years, the intermediate steps were few, in consequence of the longevity of the early inhabitants of the world. From the creation to the present moment, there have not been an hundred and fifty individuals in a line; from the creation to Moses, there were not twenty. Hence it appears, that, without new revelations to revive and enlarge the original revelation, the communication made to our first parents, which, concise as it was, could be easily remembered, might have been transmitted pure and entire to the lawgiver of the Jews, by whom it was committed to writing.

Revelation was greatly enlarged by the ministry of Moses, and additions were made to it till the days of Malachi, when the canon of the Old Testament was completed. After a long interval, the Baptist appeared, to prepare the way for our Saviour; who, being in the bosom of the Father, and acquainted with his counsels, declared him to the world, and empowered his disciples to perfect revelation by their writings, which were composed under the direction and assistance of his Spirit. The whole Scriptures are delivered to us as the rule of our faith and obedience, and are the instrument which God employs for the conversion of sinners, and the advancement of the divine life in their souls. They are the light which conducts them to the Saviour, and guides them in the way of Salvation. This important office we assign to the whole, and not exclusively to a part, on the authority of the Apostle Paul; who, having said concerning Timothy, that "from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," adds, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* The Word is the principal means which God has appointed for the application of redemption. There are indeed other religious institutions; but as they are founded on the Word, so, as far as they contribute to accomplish this end, their efficacy is derived from it. Prayer is an eminent means of obtaining spiritual blessings; but the directory of prayer is the Word, from which alone we learn what blessings we should ask, and what are the grounds on which we may hope for success. The sacraments also are means of salvation; but they would be unintelligible, unless their design, and the import of the symbols and actions, had been explained; and we should have no encouragement to use them, if we had not been assured that they are seals of the new covenant, and the Holy Spirit had been promised to render them effectual.

The word of God consists of many parts, histories, doctrines, promises, threatenings, reproofs, exhortations. I shall perhaps speak of these particularly afterwards; but, in the mean time I observe, there is not one of them which is not conducive to the great design of saving the soul. There are two great divisions of the word of God, which have been made by Theologians, and which, as they have a foundation in the word itself, are entitled to particular attention. These are, the Law and the Gospel. I shall begin with the latter, and in the first place, inquire what is the import of the term.

The word Gospel, is used in our language to ex-

* Rom. x. 13—17.

* 2 Tim. iii. 15—17.

press the Greek word ευαγγελιον, which signifies *good news*. Without losing this idea it admits of different applications, and is employed in a more general, or in a more restricted sense.

First, It signifies the history of Christ; and, accordingly, is the title prefixed to each of the four narratives of his birth, doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension, which were composed by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These received this name at a very early period, and it is retained in all Christian churches. Sometimes they were called Memoirs of Christ; but this designation does not seem to have been ever generally adopted. The other was suggested, not only by the nature of the narratives, which contain the best news that ever reached the ears of men, but by one of the inspired writers who has prefixed it to his account of our Saviour; namely Mark, who commences with these words, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." This is evidently the title of his book, as the words of Matthew, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ," are the title of the subjoined genealogy. Mark calls his narrative a Gospel, and by his authority the same name is given to the compositions of the other Evangelists.

Secondly, The Gospel signifies the Christian revelation, or the system of doctrines, ordinances, and laws, which Jesus Christ has delivered to us, and which is justly called good news; because the great subject of which it treats is salvation, and the design of all its subordinate parts is to conduct us to the enjoyment of it. This is its meaning in the commission which he gave to his Apostles, "to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."* They were sent, not merely to proclaim pardon and eternal life through him, but to instruct men in all the details of his religion; as is plain from the parallel passage in Matthew, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."† The same extensive sense is given to the word, when Paul says, that "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel;"‡ meaning, either that the future judgment is announced by the Gospel which he preached, or that the Gospel is the rule by which those who have lived under the dispensation of it will be judged. In both cases, the Gospel comprehends more than a revelation and promise of salvation through Christ. If you read the Scriptures attentively, you will find that there are many passages which require to be interpreted in this liberal manner. According to this view, the Gospel contains, not only doctrines and promises, but also precepts and threatenings. This is generally acknowledged; and, at the same time, a strange inconsistency may be observed in the conduct of some men. While they cannot deny that the Gospel signifies the whole institute of Jesus Christ, they will not allow you to speak of it as such, and without scruple charge you with heresy, if your language deviate a hairs-breadth from their arbitrary standard. There is another and restricted sense of the Gospel, which will be afterwards considered, according to which you must always regulate your phraseology. It has no commands or threatenings; and therefore, to mention the precepts of the Gospel, is to betray your ignorance, to corrupt the truth, and to turn the new covenant into a covenant of works.—But, with the leave of those zealots, we might remind them that they are now retracting what they formerly granted, and binding us to one view of a subject, after their own acknowledgment that it admits of more views than one. The Gospel largely taken has, and strictly taken has not, precepts. Speaking of it in the latter sense, I should err if I said that it had precepts; and speaking of it in the former, I should equally err if I said that it had not precepts. None but Antinomians will deny that the religion of Christ comprehends a law to be obeyed, as well as doctrines to be believed. If the phrase, precepts of the Gospel, has been improperly used, that is not a reason why it should be condemned, since it expresses a scriptural truth, but a reason why it should be used cautiously, and in such a manner as not to mislead. Let us study, with all possible care, to be orthodox in sentiments and language; but let us remember, that when we go beyond Scripture, we fall into the heterodoxy which we are solicitous to avoid. When the Apostle Paul speaks of the Gospel, he is careful to remind us that, while it manifests the Grace of God, it also inculcates the duties of morality: "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."*

In the third place, The Gospel signifies the revelation of the grace and mercy of God to sinners, or the joyful tidings of salvation through Christ. In this view, it answers exactly to its name, nothing being proclaimed by it but what is good news to our fallen and guilty race; and it is when the Gospel is thus limited, that it is distinguished by Divines from the Law, considered not only as a covenant of works, but even as a rule of life. That this is sometimes the meaning of the word, although not so often as some may imagine, is evident from the following passages. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."† "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith."‡ In the first passage, the gospel offers pardon, liberty, and consolation to sinners; and in the second, it exhibits the righteousness of Christ as the foundation of their hope. The word occurs in the same sense when the Scriptures speak of testifying "the gospel of the grace of God,"‖ and of the "light of the glorious gospel shining into the mind;"§ and when Paul says, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel;"¶ designating that as the Gospel which reveals grace in the free justification of sinners, in opposition to the doctrine which suspends this blessing upon our personal obedience.

First, The Gospel, strictly understood, comprehends the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and the gracious declarations founded upon them. It is the Gospel which informs us, that in relation to us God is love; that he thought upon us from eternity, and purposed to save us from destruction and to restore us to happiness; that with this view he appointed his only-begotten Son to be our Saviour, and entered into a covenant with him, by performing the condition of which, he should obtain all blessings for his people; that in the fulness of time, he sent him into the world to be the messenger of his mercy, laid our sins upon him, and exacted an atonement for them; that in consequence of the sacrifice upon the cross he is pacified, and is ready to receive us into favour; that he has also sent the Holy Spirit to illuminate our minds, and to

* Mark xvi. 15. † Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. ‡ Rom. ii. 16.
* Tit. ii. 11. † Luke iv. 18. ‡ Rom. i. 16, 17.
‖ Acts xx. 24. § 2 Cor. iv. 4. ¶ Gal. i. 6.

sanctify our souls; and that pardon, grace, comfort, and eternal life, are given freely to those who believe. It is evident, that these doctrines and declarations may be justly called "good tidings of great joy." Nothing can be more acceptable news to a sinner, who is sensible of his guilt, and alarmed at the consequences; nothing can be more consoling than to hear that the God whom he has offended is reconciled, and that he shall find a refuge from his justice in the arms of his mercy. You will observe that in these declarations and doctrines God appears working out salvation for us, without our assistance or interference; and that he appears solely in the character of the God of grace, his justice being appeased, and opposing no obstacle to the emanation of his love.

Secondly, The Gospel strictly taken, comprehends the great and precious promises. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."* To these we may add the promises of assistance, consolation, protection, deliverance, and eternal life. They all breathe love. They are all expressive of the good will of God towards men. They exhibit under various aspects, his grace accommodated to our necessities. They bless us at present, and give the hope of blessedness hereafter. It should also be considered, that the promises are free in this sense, that nothing is required but that we should embrace them; and that if a certain state of mind must precede the performance of some promises, which in this view may be considered as conditional, it is produced in us by the grace which is held out to us in others.

Thirdly, The Gospel strictly taken, comprehends the free offer of Christ and salvation. As God gave him in his incarnation and mission, so he still gives him to all in the gospel; that is, he exhibits him as a Saviour, and authorizes sinners to believe in him. There is no exception made of persons on account of their country, their parentage, their profession, their rank in society, or even on account of the number and degree of their sins. Every descendant of Adam is at liberty to claim an interest in the common salvation, the most illiterate, the meanest, the most unworthy. All are made welcome to Christ, both by himself and by his Father. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."† "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."‡ The universality of the offer is a proof of its freeness; which is further manifest from the consideration that no conditions are prescribed, no equivalent is demanded, nothing is required, but our acceptance of the gift. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."‖ God appears in the character of a generous benefactor, who gives all and receives nothing in return, except such expressions of our gratitude as are prompted by his own Spirit.

Lastly, The Gospel strictly taken, comprehends the earnest and affectionate invitations addressed to sinners. Some of these have been quoted. The Bible is full of them, and we find them alone or intermixed with other subjects. "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men."* The object of them is to persuade men to accept the gift which God presents to them, to awaken their attention, excite their affections, to make them perceive and feel that it is their interest and their duty to comply. So far as they have the nature of commands, or constitute a moral obligation upon those to whom they are addressed, they do not belong to the gospel in the strict sense in which the term is at present used; but, as expressive of God's regard to sinners, and of the sincerity of his desire for their salvation, they are a part of the gospel, and an amiable display of its grace.

The design of thus accurately defining the Gospel, is not to distinguish words but things, to fix the boundaries of the two great divisions of the word of God, and to guard against the danger of confounding them together. It may happen that a person who clearly perceives the difference of the things, does not with equal care distinguish them in words; or that, knowing that the revelation of Jesus Christ contains doctrines of grace and free promises, and that these constitute a different class from its precepts, does not assign a distinct name to each, but sums them all up under the general denomination of the gospel. Shall we therefore condemn him as ignorant, and a corrupter of the truth? There are persons who make no scruple to do so, not knowing that they at the same time pronounce a sweeping sentence upon the Church of God, from the earliest times down to a very recent date. Our modern definitions were little known, I believe, till the Reformation; and those who lived before it, back to a very remote period, expressed themselves on this subject in language which seems to us to be loose; yet we are not to suppose, that till a century or two ago, no Christian understood the Gospel, properly so called, and that all were in an error with respect to the true nature of the dispensation of grace. Let us retain our more correct phraseology; but let us remember that things are of more importance than words, and not hastily make a man an offender for a word, whose views are perhaps as scriptural as our own.

There are however some modes of expression which should not be passed over without animadversion, because they evidently are founded in mistaken views of the subject, and mix things together which ought not to be confounded. There are many who represent the gospel as a new law of grace. It is a law, they say, because it prescribes certain duties to be performed by us, as the condition of salvation; and it is a law of grace, because the condition is comparatively easy, faith and sincere obedience being accepted, instead of the perfect obedience which the first covenant required. I had occasion formerly to speak of this system, and to show that it is contrary to Scripture; and I now refer to it, not with a view to refutation, but to lay before you an instance in which gross ignorance of the gospel is betrayed. Those who teach this system, preach another gospel, that new gospel against which Paul declaims with so much vehemence in his Epistle to the Galatians. It is plain that the Galatians had not renounced Christianity, but that they had been tempted, or at least some of them, by false teachers, to conjoin their own works with faith, as the ground of their acceptance, exactly according to the plan of Neonomians. Now, observe what he says of them: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."† They had fallen from grace, or abandoned the gospel while they professed to adhere to it, by embracing a doctrine which was not the gospel. The gospel is corrupted by every attempt to introduce works, either as the sole or the concomitant cause of our justification; by representing faith as effectual to justify us, because it produces good works;

* Heb. viii. 10—12. † John vi. 32, 33.
‡ Matth. xi. 28. ‖ Is. lv. 1.

* Prov. viii. 4. † Gal. v. 4.

by teaching that any personal qualifications are requisite to recommend us to the favour of God; by resting our right to Christ, or our warrant to believe in him, upon certain previous exercises and affections of our minds; by proposing any foundation of hope but his atonement and obedience. By these expedients, you convert the gospel, which is a pure declaration and offer of grace, into a law which prescribes duties and rewards them. The gospel indeed is sometimes represented as a law, the law which has come out of Zion, the law of faith;* but in those cases a law signifies simply the will of a superior, a declaration of the will of God; or the designation is given to the gospel in its more enlarged sense, according to which it contains precepts as well as promises, and in particular, requires faith as the means which God has appointed for giving an interest in the offered salvation. It is on this account that faith is sometimes described as obedience; for example, when the gospel is said to be preached to all nations "for the obedience of faith;" when the Apostle remarks concerning the Jews, that "they had not all obeyed the gospel," and when he says of our Saviour, that "being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."†

To sum up what has been said, in the words of a celebrated foreign Divine, "If we take the Gospel in a strict sense, as consisting of mere promises, or an absolute exhibition of salvation in Christ, then it properly prescribes no duty, exacts nothing, orders nothing, not even this,—believe, trust, hope in the Lord; but it relates, tells, signifies to us what God promises in Christ, what he wills to do, and is about to do. Every prescription of duty pertains to the law; and this must be held, if we would with constancy maintain, with all the Reformed, the perfection of the law, as containing all virtues, and all the duties of holiness. But the law, accommodated to the covenant of grace, and, according to it, written on the hearts of the elect, commands us to embrace all those things which are proposed in the Gospel with unfeigned faith, and to regulate our life suitably to its grace. When God, therefore, promises, in the covenant of grace, to the elect sinner, faith, repentance, and consequently eternal life; the law, the obligation of which can never be dissolved, and which extends to every duty, binds the man to assent to that truth; to set a high value upon those promises; to desire them earnestly; to seek them and embrace them. Moreover, since the admirable providence of God has disposed the promises in such an order that faith and repentance precede, salvation follows, a man is bound by the same law to approve and love this arrangement, and to expect salvation in no other way. He who accepts the promises of the covenant in the order in which they are proposed, binds himself by that acceptance, first to perform the duties contained in prior promises, before he can hope to come to the enjoyment of those which are posterior. In this respect the covenant is mutual. God proposes his promises in the Gospel in a certain order. Man is bound by the force of the law, acting in subservience to the covenant of grace, to embrace the promises in that order. While faith does so, the believer binds himself at the same time to the study of a new life, before he can expect a happy life; and in this manner the convention is on both sides."‡

Thus it appears that, when we understand the word Gospel in what is conceived to be its proper sense, it does not enjoin, but merely declares and promises. Even those precepts which may be peculiarly called evangelical, do not belong to it; as, to believe, to repent, to hope for salvation; and they can be called evangelical only on account of their object, which is the grace of God revealed and offered in the Gospel. In truth, they emanate from the law. It follows that, when a minister inculcates these and other duties, he preaches the law; and then only preaches the Gospel, according to this definition of it, when he proclaims the love of God in Christ, and the blessings and privileges of believers. But I have shown you that the Gospel has a more extensive meaning; and consequently, that we may be said to preach the Gospel, when we inculcate the institutions and laws of Christ upon evangelical principles.

Every part of the word of God, as we have already remarked, is subservient to the application of redemption, but this office belongs in a particular manner to the Gospel, which is the only means of beginning the work in the soul, and holds the principal place in carrying it on. Every faithful minister, therefore, will preach it; not only because it is his duty to declare all the counsel of God, but because he knows that upon a faithful exhibition of the Gospel depends the success of his labours. It will not be the sole subject of his discourses; but he will give it the pre-eminence to which it is entitled; like Paul, who said to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;"* and he will teach all the other part of Divine truth in connexion with it.

First, It is by the Gospel that men are converted. From their state of insensibility and security, they may be raised by the doctrine of the law; but it is the Gospel alone which will turn them from sin to God. Mere terror would drive them, if possible, farther from God; while it increased their fear, it would increase their hatred, and create such a desire as our first parents felt, to retire from his presence, and to conceal themselves from his eyes. Nothing will prevail upon a man, conscious of guilt, and dreading deserved punishment, to draw near to his offended Creator, but the assurance that he is disposed to be merciful, that something effectual has been done to appease his anger, and that he will receive and pardon those who, in sincerity, supplicate his favour. Such an assurance is obtained only by the Gospel, which makes known his gracious design, and points to the atonement of Christ, which has reconciled the exercise of his mercy with the claims of his justice. Hence it is evident that the Gospel, considered simply as a moral means, and independently of the Divine constitution, which has connected the influences of the Spirit with the preaching of it, possesses a fitness, an adaptation to the end proposed, which is not to be found in any other part of the Word. The character of God, notwithstanding its intrinsic excellence, will appear repulsive to the transgressors of his law, unless there be added to it the amiableness and the attractions which it derives from the mediation of Christ. Accordingly, the Gospel has, in every age, proved the power of God unto salvation. It was by the preaching of it that three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost, and myriads were afterwards induced to renounce Judaism and heathenism, and to embrace the religion of Christ with the full consent of their hearts. By the same doctrine the great spiritual revolution was effected at the Reformation. Men, indeed, had long perceived some of the corruptions and abuses of the Church of Rome; and when the light of Divine truth began to shine, they saw them more fully and distinctly; but what had the most powerful effect of all, was the doctrine of the cross, the offer of salvation, without the intercession of saints, and without penance and the merit of good works, through the atoning blood and vicarious obedience of the Redeemer. When the Moravians established themselves in Green-

* Is. ii. 3. Rom. iii. 27. † Rom. xvi. 26. x. 16. Heb. v. 9.
‡ Witsii. Animad. Irenicæ, cap. xv. § 9.

* 1 Cor. ii. 2.

land, they endeavoured to reclaim the rude nations of that inhospitable region from idolatry and superstition, by teaching the doctrines of natural religion; but they laboured for several years, without exciting attention, or gaining a single convert. As soon, however, as they changed their system, and began to preach Christ crucified, the poor savages listened with wonder, eagerly inquired whether what they now heard was true, and believing with the heart, were baptized. For a long period a Church has flourished in that frozen clime, and the dreary desert has been enlivened by the songs of salvation. It is still by the same doctrine that the human heart is impressed. The preaching of the law, or of morality, without the Gospel, is a cold and unprofitable exercise; and what every man who knows the truth must have expected *a priori*, is realized in experience. Virtue is disregarded, and vice is practised, by those in whose ears lessons of duty are sounded from Sabbath to Sabbath. Astonishment has been sometimes expressed, that such preaching should prove totally useless, while the preaching of salvation by grace, which in the opinion of the disputers of this world, tends to licentiousness, should produce a quite contrary effect. But there is no cause for such astonishment. Every man who calmly considers the nature of the Gospel, will perceive that it is calculated to excite love to God, and to engage our active powers in his service; and every man who understands his Bible, knows that it is this doctrine alone which God has promised to accompany with his blessing.

Secondly, It is by the Gospel that peace of conscience is obtained. It is called the Gospel of peace, because it brings tidings to us of the reconciliation effected between God and men by the blood of Christ; and when believed, it dispels our fears, and enables us to look up to him with confidence. Men may talk of peace of mind to be procured by the performance of their duty, of the calm recollections of virtue, and the serenity which they diffuse over the soul; but their ignorance and insensibility are truly pitiable. If they knew their duty, they would feel that they could not perform it so perfectly as to satisfy the demands of an enlightened conscience, and that their best works are attended with such defects as might be made the ground of their condemnation at the tribunal of the Omniscient. It is his voice alone which stills the tumult of the soul. How would it be agitated by the sense of past and present sins, if it had no other refuge than it may find in itself! When conscious of innumerable transgressions and infirmities, and condemned by its own impartial sentence, it is relieved solely by a view of the atonement, and the promise of pardon. It will be found, I presume, that the state of a person's mind is regulated by his views of the Gospel. Those who mingle faith and works together, cannot rise to the confidence of hope but by the aid of presumption; and if their consciences are in any degree faithful, they must be liable to be disturbed and alarmed by every failure. But when a Christian steadfastly contemplates the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, and the evidence that it was perfectly acceptable to his Father, he enjoys peace, notwithstanding his feeling of utter unworthiness; peace which nothing can interrupt, but the suspension of his faith: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Thirdly, It is from the Gospel that the consolation of Christians flows. Ask them, what soothes their sorrow, sustains their patience, brightens their hopes, and cheers their lonely hours, and they refer to some doctrine or promise of the Gospel. The view which it gives of the character of God is consoling; for it exhibits him as wise, affectionate, faithful, and constant in his love as a Father, in whose hands they may trust their best and dearest interests, and of whose attention and regard they are never permitted to doubt. In connexion with this view is the equally comfortable one which it gives of his dispensations. Our fearful and foreboding minds are apt to suspect evil in adverse events, to see tokens of wrath in the surrounding scene, to apprehend the most alarming consequences, to think that we are abandoned for ever. But the Gospel sheds light upon the darkest events; and, although it does not explain every difficulty, and substitute knowledge in the room of faith, yet it enables us to anticipate with confidence a glorious and happy result, for it assures us that the reign of God is the reign of love. In one word, the great remedy for the pains and disappointments of the present life, is the hope of a better. Reason speculates about it, and nature desires immortality; but the Gospel reveals it, and gives the certain hope that our future existence will be happy. Its promises are our charter to the heavenly inheritance, which is rendered valid and unalterable by the death and resurrection of Christ.

Lastly, It is the Gospel alone which purifies the heart. I have already remarked that experience has proved, and is daily proving, the preaching of morality without the Gospel to be fruitless labour. The Gospel alone gives such views of the character, and dispensations, and designs of God, as will make a lasting impression upon that part of our constitution which is the seat of holiness; namely, the heart, or the affections and active principles of our nature. If love is the fulfilling of the law, obedience will be best secured by that system which is best adapted to inspire love. The outcry which has been raised against the doctrine of salvation by grace, is often sounding in our ears; and you know that such representations have been given of its tendency and consequences as might lead us to believe, that licentiousness must abound wherever it is embraced; or, if facts extort an acknowledgment that such is not always the effect, it is insinuated, either that the holiness of its abettors is hypocritical, or that it is owing to some accidental cause, which counteracts the influence of their creed. Nothing, it is pretended, is so effectual to secure obedience, as to suspend our hope of eternal life upon it. This is to make religion a calculation of interest, so that they alone will attend to its injunctions who prefer the happiness of the world to come, to the pleasures of sin. But, if there should be persons who prefer the pleasures of sin because they are present, to the happiness of heaven which is future, this scheme can do nothing for them. It has no other expedient by which it might prevail upon them to make a wiser choice. We know that there are many in whose eyes earthly pleasures possess superior attractions, and have so completely gained the ascendency, that the strongest arguments can produce no change of inclination; and hence it appears, that this plan, which depends for its success upon an accurate comparison, and a fair estimate of consequences, is, in their case, an airy speculation. In this, as in every other instance, the foolishness of God is wiser than men. The Gospel, by inspiring the love of God, creates the love of holiness, from which obedience flows spontaneously, and does not wait till it is extorted by the consideration of interest. It thus gives a charm to obedience, infuses into it a feeling of delight, and ensures our perseverance; for the pleasures of sin will not, for any length of time, draw the Christian aside from a course of life in which he has experienced greater happiness than they could ever impart. The question is not, whether he shall consent to suffer for a time, in the hope of a recompense hereafter; but whether he shall make a present sacrifice, which no sublunary gain could compensate; whether he shall forsake the fountain of living water, and hew

* Rom. v. 1.

out to himself a broken cistern which can hold no water. As no holiness is genuine but that which springs from the faith of the Gospel, so no other is steady in its principle, and will stand the test of temptation. They alone will serve God with fidelity, who look upon him as their Father, and confide in the promises of assistance and acceptance; and they alone will follow Christ through good report and bad report, who feel the constraining influence of his love.

LECTURE LXXXV.

ON THE WORD OF GOD.

On Preaching the Gospel.—The Law as distinguished from the Gospel.—Its use in awakening Sinners and as a rule of life to Believers.—Connexion of the Law and Gospel as means of Salvation.—Use of the other portions of Scripture.—Observations on the Reading and Preaching of the Word.—Necessity of the accompaniment of the Spirit.

In the preceding lecture, I endeavoured to ascertain the various senses which the word Gospel bears in Scripture. It has appeared that, besides being the title of the four inspired narratives of our Saviour, and being used also to denote the whole revelation which was published to the world by him and his Apostles, it is sometimes restricted to that part of it which contains the doctrines of grace, and the promises of salvation. It is contrary to Scripture itself to call this alone the Gospel, as this name belongs to the whole Christian system; but this is exclusively its meaning when we speak of the Gospel as distinguished from the Law.

It is of importance to be accurate in our language on this subject; but it is still more important to be accurate in our ideas. Much confusion prevails, not only among private Christians, whose mistakes can be accounted for from want of instruction or from the neglect of inquiry, but also among those who, being appointed teachers of others in faith and verity, prove blind leaders of the blind. There are not a few of the latter class who are as ignorant of the true distinction between the Law and the Gospel as any of their hearers; who, accordingly, confound them together, and while they profess to preach Christ, teach a doctrine in which he holds only a subordinate place. It is necessary that a minister should be able rightly to divide the word of truth, to distinguish things which in themselves are different, to state them in their order and connexion, and to apply them to the purposes which they are respectively intended to serve. Nothing is more disgraceful to him, than to mistake one thing for another, and by his bungling manner of handling the word of God, to render it of no effect.

Men may preach the grace of God, but not preach the Gospel. The phrase may occur often in their discourses and writings; and thus the simple may be led to believe that they are reading and hearing evangelical doctrine, while those declaimers are in truth labouring to subvert the Gospel of Christ. However loud and eloquent may be his praise of Divine grace, if a person make it consist in giving us a milder law, in lowering the terms of acceptance, and admitting our sincere endeavours, instead of perfect obedience, as the condition of future happiness; if he represents it as grace given to all indiscriminately, to enable them to work out their salvation; or a grace which it is left to ourselves to receive or reject at our pleasure, which may be lost, and will prove ineffectual unless we lend our aid to it; it is evident, that he knows neither what he says, nor whereof he affirms.

Again, A man may preach salvation by faith, and not preach the Gospel of Christ. His doctrine is orthodox in sound, but is erroneous in sense. For what is the faith which he teaches? Is it a humble dependance upon the righteousness of Christ, to the exclusion of our own? No; it is what he calls believing obedience; not faith alone, but faith and obedience conjoined; the name of the cause being given not only to itself, but to its effect, out of compliment to Scripture, and to please fastidious ears. You will find that, in this manner, some teachers of faith explain their own meaning. We are saved by faith, not solely as it receives Christ, but as it works by love; or, in other words we are saved not simply by a living faith, which proves its genuineness by good works, but by faith which includes good works, and derives its efficacy from them. And thus, while sinners are told that they are justified by faith, and so far the doctrine seems to be Scriptural, they are in reality led to believe that they are justified by works.

Farther, Ministers may preach the atonement, and yet not preach the Gospel of Christ. They may admit that Christ died for our sins; that his sacrifice was acceptable to God; that, for his sake, he pardons us; and that to his mediation we are indebted for all the blessings of salvation; but, while they give goodly words, they may hold sentiments which render them in a great measure nugatory. If they teach that our Redeemer died, not actually to reconcile God to us, but to render him reconcilable; that he died to procure the making of a new covenant with us, the terms of which are to be fulfilled by ourselves; that he died to give efficacy to our repentance, meaning that somehow it becomes, through his death, a sort of satisfaction for our sins; in all these cases, they misrepresent the nature, and extenuate the value, of the atonement of the cross. They take away with the one hand what they had given with the other. According to their doctrine, it is not true that the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin, that through it we have redemption, that by it he has made peace: because there still remains something to be done by us, to render his blood effectual for our deliverance from something to be added to it as the conjunct cause of our pardon.

In the next place, Men may preach the privileges of believers, and not preach the Gospel of Christ. They may talk of justification, without referring to Scriptural faith by which alone it is enjoyed; of sanctification, without assigning the grace of the Divine Spirit as its only efficient cause; of protection by the power of God, and peace and joy; while the protection depends upon our own dutiful conduct, and may be forfeited if we are not careful to deserve its continuance; the peace arises, not from the application of the blood of Christ to the conscience, but from our own fidelity in the performance of our duty; and the hope is not founded on the promises of God, and the righteousness of Christ, but on the recollection of our own meritorious deeds. The privileges enumerated are conferred by the Gospel, and are exhibited in its declarations; but as soon as you disjoin them from Christ, and ascribe the enjoyment of them to any other cause than his mediation, they cease to be gifts of grace, and are changed into the rewards of the law. It is in Christ, in a state of union to him, and solely for his sake, that God blesses us with all spiritual blessings.

Lastly, Men may preach the happiness of heaven, and yet not preach the Gospel of Christ. They may be chargeable with doing so on two accounts, either because they misrepresent the nature of that happiness, or because they do not truly state the means of obtaining it. To affirm that we are indeed pardoned through the atonement of Christ, but that we must ourselves establish a right to eternal life by our obedience, is to preach something very different from the Gospel; although an attempt should be made to qualify the doctrine, and to give it an evangelical form,

by subjoining that it is the grace of God which enables us to obey. This is plainly to set even grace in opposition to Christ, as if it were intended to help us to perform a part of the work of salvation, which he claims as exclusively his own. Nor is the Gospel preached when heaven is described as a place of rest and enjoyment, without a reference to the presence of Christ in it, as constituting the chief source of its glory and blessedness. We all condemn the grossness of the Mahometans, who expect a sensual paradise; but even professed Christians are by no means united in their views of the world to come. The notions of many are altogether undefined; but, if it is not considered as a holy as well as a happy place, and if its happiness is contemplated under any view which excludes the love and service of the Saviour, or allows to these only a subordinate place, it is a heaven of imagination, and not of the Scriptures. As Christ is the life and glory of the Gospel, so he is associated with all just conceptions of future felicity. He is the sun of the celestial world.

It is of the utmost importance that private Christians, and especially ministers of religion, should have accurate notions of the Gospel. Truth is one, but error is multifarious. It is truth alone that will promote the salvation of the soul; every modification of error is injurious in a greater or less degree. "If ye know the truth, the truth shall make you free."*

I have said that there are two great divisions of the Word of God, the Gospel and the Law. Having spoken of the first, I now proceed to the second.

The Law, as distinguished from the Gospel comprehends the preceptive part of the will of God, and the denunciations of his wrath against transgressors. There is a twofold view in which the law may be contemplated—as a covenant of works, and as a rule of life; and in both it is conducive to the general design of the Word, which is the application of redemption.

The Scriptures give an account of the covenant of works, not indeed under this name, but in terms which imply all that it signifies. Considered in itself, this covenant is opposed to our salvation. It prescribes terms which we are utterly incapable of performing, and denounces a curse upon every transgressor. But this is not all. So far as it proves to any the occasion of endeavours to seek justification by their own works, it stands in the way of their final happiness, for it is certain that the attainment of it by such means is impossible. When men, reading in the Scriptures that he who doth these things shall live by them, conceive that this is not merely the statement of a hypothetical case, but the proposal of a plan to be acted upon, and hence, commence a course of obedience in the expectation of success; they turn aside from the grace of the gospel and involve themselves in all the difficulties and perplexities of a hopeless undertaking. They wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. They convert the information, which, wisely used, might have led them to the Saviour, into the means of blinding their minds, and alienating their hearts from him. This is not the purpose for which the law as a covenant is made known to them in the Scriptures. God did not intend that they should attempt to repair what is broken, and to re-establish what is set aside. The design is altogether of a different nature. It is to rouse men from a state of security, and to apprise them of their danger, that they may flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." It shows us that we have transgressed, and what are the consequences of unpardoned guilt according to the divine constitution. This is the office which it is appointed to serve, or the relation which it bears to the revelation of Christ. This revelation and the law are distinct; but they are associated for a general purpose, the one being preparatory to the other, and paving the way for the cordial reception of it. The declaration of human guilt, and of the dreadful recompense which awaits it, is intended, not only to vindicate the holiness and justice of God as the moral Governor of the world, but to impress upon his offending subjects a sense of their perilous situation, that they be excited to escape from it by embracing the offers of his mercy. As this is the aim of the threatenings in the word of God where they do not stand alone, but appear in connexion with the promises of pardon and salvation; so it is the design of the strict injunctions of obedience, and of the occasional representation of it as the original term of our acceptance with God. It is a fatal error to suppose, that the design is to encourage us to attempt the obtaining of the divine favour by our feeble endeavours. It is to convince us that the terms are so high, that we ought to despair of fulfilling them; so that we may no longer "go about to establish our own righteousness," and may "submit to the righteousness of God." The Scriptures speak to us in the same manner as our Lord addressed the young man, who proposed this question, "What good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" To suppose that, when Jesus said to him, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,"* he seriously meant to signify to him, that he might so keep them as to attain the reward of immortality, is to suppose that, on this occasion, he contradicted himself, and taught a doctrine which himself and his Apostles have expressly condemned. He adapted the answer to the question; and as the young man was seeking salvation by the law, he told him what he must do, not to encourage him in his error, but to correct it; and accordingly he proceeded to bring his obedience, in which he trusted, to the test, and to show him that it was sadly defective.

Thus you perceive the subservience of the covenant of works, and consequently of those parts of the word in which it is announced, to the gracious designs of God towards sinners. The covenant itself is disannulled, as every agreement is by the failure of one of the parties. The other party ceases to be bound by his stipulations, and has a right to demand that the penalty be inflicted. God does not now deal with men according to this covenant, except in the way of punishment for the breach of it; and the only character which he sustains in relation to those who are under it, is that of a Judge. He promises life to no man upon its terms; but, still demanding obedience as naturally due to him, he threatens death because it has not been performed. Its original sanctions are published, to show us what we owe to our Maker, what we have failed to perform, and what evil we have brought upon ourselves, that we may feel the necessity of another plan of salvation, and may believe in Him who is "the end of the law for righteousness."

Let us now consider the law as a rule of life; and first, let us ascertain what it signifies under this designation. The law, as a rule of life, is the law divested of its federal form, and considered simply as an authoritative declaration of the duty which God requires from his people. It enjoins obedience; not, however, as the condition upon which their future happiness is suspended, but as the homage which they owe to God as the supreme Governor of the world, and the Father of those who believe. I acknowledge that there are connected with it promises of spiritual blessings; but it should be observed, that obedience is not the procuring cause of those blessings, but merely the qualification which must precede the enjoyment of them, and that

* John viii. 32.

* Matth. xix. 16, 17.

the reward is wholly of grace. I acknowledge too, that even eternal life is sometimes represented as a recompense of the obedience of the saints; but it is plain to every person who understands the Scriptures, that it is a recompense only in an improper sense, and is so called because it will follow their obedience, and compensate every labour to which they have submitted, and every sacrifice which they have made for the glory of God. We must beware of imagining that, having set aside the old covenant, God has made a new one with man under the Gospel; and that the law of works is revived under a different name, and with some abatement of its rigour, in accommodation to human infirmity. The true situation of believers does not resemble that of servants who obey their masters for hire, but that of men who obey their Father from love, and who although they know that the inheritance is secured to them, expect in the mean time to be treated kindly and liberally according to their dutiful conduct.

The law, as a rule of life, is subservient to the salvation of believers in various ways. It is the directory of their conduct, their guide in their whole course. It is of the utmost importance to know what is pleasing to God, and we learn it from the law, which is a summary of all our duties. Heathens have no means of ascertaining their duty, except by reasoning and the dictates of conscience; and hence their systems of morality have always been imperfect. It is an inestimable advantage which Christians enjoy, that they have only to look into the "perfect law of liberty," as an Apostle calls it; not to engage in lengthened discussions, but to read; simply to ask, What is written? What says the law? and, whatever obscurity may attend some parts of revelation, whatever difficulties may present themselves to the mind when contemplating them, in consequence of the limited nature of our faculties, and the impossibility of perceiving the link which connects them with other things the truth of which must be admitted,—the moral precepts are plain to every capacity, and nothing hinders any man from perceiving them, but carelessness or corrupt inclinations, by which his judgment is perverted. With respect to some other points, Christians differ from one another; but in their views of the duties of holiness, all conscientious inquirers are agreed. The law serves also to excite them to their duty. Its instructions are authoritative. It not only tells them what they should do, but it commands them. They hear the voice of God in its precepts. A sense of obligation is created; conscience re-echoes his voice, or republishes the command, and exacts instant and cheerful obedience. It accompanies them as a monitor, who speaks although they alone hear, in the midst of company as well as in the solitude of retirement, and says, This you ought to do; that you must not do. God promises to write his law upon the hearts of his people; and the promise is performed when their minds are so enlightened by it, their consciences are so impressed, and their wills are so controlled by its authority, that they make it the rule by which their whole conduct is governed.

Unholy men set no value upon this part of the word of God. The law they regard as a restraint, because they wish to live without any rule except their own inclinations. It appears in a different light to those whose aim it is to please and glorify God, and they are thankful that he has himself instructed them so clearly and particularly. The words of the Psalmist are expressive of the sentiments of all the saints: "More to be desired are thy statutes than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward."* The commands of the law, its admonitions, and even its reproofs, are acceptable to him who is desirous that nothing may be found in him, on which God would look with disapprobation.

If holiness is an essential part of salvation, the utility of the law is manifest. It is the standard of holiness. It shows what the saints ought to be, and what God has purposed to make them. It is the pattern according to which his Spirit fashions them; and its prescriptions are the means of exciting them to make progress in holiness, to go from strength to strength, to press towards the goal of perfection. Its purity, which to others is a formidable objection, is the reason why the saints so highly esteem it. They love it because it is without a flaw; because it is a true image of the moral excellence of its Author; because it urges them on in their course, and will not permit them to stop, till their heart and conduct exhibits its exact counterpart. Hence they offer up such prayers as these: "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way."*

It is necessary, in speaking of the law as a rule of life to believers, carefully to consider its connexion with the gospel. It is founded upon the gospel; that is, it is given to them as persons who by the gospel have been brought into a state of favour with God, and are in possession of great spiritual privileges. This is supposed to be taught by the preface to the ten commandments which were promulgated to the Israelites from Sinai; "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."† The fact, it has been observed, brought forward as the reason or motive of our obedience, is that the Lawgiver is our Lord and Redeemer, or stands in a saving relation to us.‡ Thus the preface is explained by our Church; but to establish this view of the words, it would be necessary to ascertain the precise nature of the transaction at Sinai; a subject of difficult discussion, and in determining which, even those who are called orthodox are by no means agreed. The difficulty is certainly not lessened by a passage in the writings of Paul, which imports that the law given at that time, might be conceived to have set aside the promise made to Abraham of salvation through his illustrious seed;‖ a supposition for which it does not appear that there would have been any ground, if it had been known to be a publication of the covenant of grace. The words under consideration may be understood simply to import, that, since God had revealed himself to the Israelites in preference to other nations, and had rescued them from the hands of their enemies, they should pay a sacred regard to his commands. Whatever view we may take of the preface to the law, we are certain that, as a rule of life, it emanates from the God of love, and calls upon believers to perform obedience in testimony of their gratitude for his goodness. A distinction which has been often made may be mentioned, because it expresses an important truth, that the law is not given to believers that they may live by it, but that they are to obey it, because they already live. When more plainly and fully expressed, the sentiment is, that obedience is not enjoined upon believers, that they may obtain the favour of God and eternal life; but they are required to obey, because he has "accepted them in the beloved," and they have the Holy Spirit, who dwells in their hearts to assist them.

* Ps. xix. 10, 11.

* Ps. cxix. 33—37.
† Exod. xx. 2.
‡ Shorter Catechism, Q. 44.
‖ Gal. iii. 17.

The law commands, and the gospel promises. Now there is a perfect accordance between the promises of the one, and the commands of the other. The promises exhibit the grace by which we are enabled to obey the commands; and we see in the connexion between them, the fulfilment of the humble and pious request of Augustine, "*Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis.*"* The believer is fully furnished for every good work. If the law commands us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, the gospel promises that he will "circumcise our hearts to love him."† If the law commands us to repent, the gospel promises "the spirit of grace and of supplications, that we may mourn as for an only son, and be in bitterness as for a first-born."‡ If the law commands us "to make to ourselves a new heart," God promises in the gospel "to take away the heart of stone, and to give us a heart of flesh."‖ If the law requires us to "walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord," this is the promise of the gospel, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."§ It would be easy to go into a long detail, but the specimen which I have given is sufficient and will direct you in your inquiries into the subject.

The law and the gospel are the two grand divisions of the word of God; but they do not exhaust its contents. It comprehends other subjects, which contribute to the general design, and are entitled to our attention at present. "All Scripture is profitable."

The word of God contains a history of the human race from the creation to the flood, and a more particular history of the Israelites, and of other nations who were settled in their vicinity, and with whom they were connected in various ways. The history of the Israelites is the history of the Church, till the canon of the ancient Scriptures was completed; and in the New Testament the subject is resumed. It therefore affords illustrious displays of the wisdom, and power, and grace, and faithfulness, and holiness of God. The history of the Israelites, and of other nations, is the history of Providence; and is interesting, not only as a detail of ancient facts, in which view it gratifies curiosity, but as an illustration of the character and conduct of God as the moral Governor of the world, and in this view it is conducive to piety. There are other authentic histories from which much useful instruction may be derived; but from the manner in which they are conducted, our attention is fixed almost exclusively upon the operations of men, their schemes of policy, the achievements of their power, and the vicissitudes of their fortune; while the histories which we find in the Bible lead us directly to God. The revolutions in the state of things are the effects of his will and agency; nations rise and fall according to his pleasure; the passions of men are instruments wielded by his arm; he permits their wrath to go forth, and sets bounds to it which it cannot pass. This representation of the course of events is new; the affairs of mankind are exhibited to us in the light of religion; and from the signatures of Divine agency upon them, they are calculated to awaken sentiments of reverence for God, confidence in his care, and submission to his will. When, in reading the Scriptures, the mind is directed to him, its histories prove highly edifying; and pious impressions are made upon those who had perused other histories with indifference, or solely with the interest which was created by the nature of the events, and the eloquence of the writers.

The word of God presents also examples of goodness and wickedness in the conduct of individuals. With respect to the latter, they are warnings to us; beacons erected to point out the rocks upon which others have been shipwrecked, as well as testimonies borne to the power and justice of God in their punishment, that others may hear and fear. I refer only to a single instance, that of Pharaoh, because particular notice is taken of it by an Apostle. "The Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."* The examples of conversion, and of faith, patience, and obedience, are intended to encourage both sinners and saints. They display the riches of Divine mercy in the pardon of transgressors, that those who are awakened may not despair; and they show that the grace of God has been sufficient for his people in past ages, that by its aid they have resisted powerful temptations, and have been enabled to perform difficult duties, that others may be excited to tread in their steps. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, a short account of the ancient worthies who by their faith and their works had glorified God, is concluded with this exhortation: "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."†

The miracles recorded in Scripture tend to exalt our ideas of the power of God, and to confirm our faith. It is by them that the Scriptures are proved to be his word; for they are the attestation which he gave to the divine mission of Moses and the Prophets, of Christ and his Apostles. The same purpose is served by the prophecies, as it is manifest that the Prophets were his inspired messengers, who foretold, long before they happened, events which no human sagacity could have foreseen, and which depended upon the free agency of men. They serve also to confirm our belief of the moral administration of God, when we see the system of human affairs conducted according to a plan previously revealed by him; and they minister to the encouragement and consolation of the saints, by throwing a cheering light upon the future, and unfolding the prospect of the reign of righteousness and truth in the earth, and of the final deliverance of the Church from the power of her enemies.

The utility of the devotional parts of Scripture is obvious. They present models to be imitated by the saints in their pious exercises, and excitements to cultivate communion with God. The Psalms of David, in particular, have been held in high estimation in every age. There, we are presented with an example of faith and love, soaring to a height which few have reached, even with all the advantages of the superior light and grace of the Gospel. We see the ardent longings of his soul for God; his deep distress when sin had interrupted his fellowship with him, or the violence of men had excluded him from the sanctuary; and his joy when God again made the light of his countenance shine upon his soul. We see how he, and the other holy men whose compositions are found in the same collection, trusted in God amidst affliction, and persecution, and desertion, adored his judgments, embraced his promises, obeyed his commandments, and prayed for his favour. These things are examples to us; "They are written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."‡ They are a specimen of the manner in which God deals with his people; they show us how spiritual joy is gained and lost; what is the exercise

* Grant what thou requirest, and require what thou wilt.
† Deut. xxx. 6. ‡ Zech. xii. 10. ‖ Ez. xi. 19.
§ Ez. xxxvi. 27.

* Rom. ix. 17, † Heb. xii. 1. ‡ Rom. xv. 4.

suitable to the particular circumstances in which we are placed; how we should wait upon God; and what are the advantages of perseverance in prayer and supplication. They are the means of infusing the same spirit into others; and often has the devotion of Christians been kindled by the flame which glowed in the bosom of these holy Jews.

The word is to be used by reading and hearing it, both being appointed to be means of salvation: "The Spirit of God," says our Church, "maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation."* I shall not call in question this proposition, so far as it respects the pre-eminence of preaching; although I must say, that the Scriptures quoted in proof, do not appear to me to establish the point, but when fairly interpreted, to imply nothing more than that God accomplishes his gracious designs by the word, whether read or heard; for some of them relate to the one mode of dispensing it, and some to the other, and none of them gives the preference to either. I acknowledge that more is said concerning the effects of the preaching, than of the reading of the word; although nothing can be stronger than the assertion of Paul, that the Scriptures read "are able to make us wise unto salvation;"† but for the more frequent mention of the former, it is easy to account without the supposition of its superior efficacy. For some time after Christ gave a commission to his Apostles, no part of the New Testament was written; and when its books were published, they existed only in manuscripts, which could not be transcribed without much time and expense, and to which therefore comparatively few could have access. From the nature of the case, the Gospel was chiefly propagated by preaching, and the references to this mode of dispensing it are consequently frequent. Preaching was necessarily the principal means by which the world was converted and the primitive church was established; and it must have continued so, till copies of the Scriptures were multiplied, in consequence of the invention of printing. There is no doubt that God has, in every age, blessed the reading of the word for illuminating the minds of men, and changing their hearts; and that many a conversion has been effected, in private dwellings as well as in the Church, by the silent perusal of the Scriptures as well as by the living voice of the ambassadors of Christ. The benefit which the saints derive from the study of them is the subject of daily experience; and they can tell how Divine light has shined into their minds, and their hearts have been filled with peace and joy; how their drooping spirits have been revived, and their impaired strength has been recruited, while they turned over the sacred pages, and devoutly meditated upon their contents. In our own times, the Scriptures have proved effectual to open the eyes of not a few Heathens, and Mahometans, and Jews, and Roman Catholics, and nominal Christians in the Protestant Churches; and from the unexampled zeal to circulate them, which has been recently displayed, and which, there can be no question, is under the direction of Providence, there is reason to believe that it is the Divine intention to make eminent use of them in accomplishing the great spiritual revolution which is approaching.

These observations are not designed to impugn the common doctrine of the superior efficacy of preaching; although, at the same time, I would say, that unless it can be established by scriptural proofs, it is no article of faith, and must be considered merely as a deduction of experience. There can be no dispute that the preaching of the Gospel has been productive of mighty effects, not only at the commencement of the present dispensation, but in all the subsequent ages. The promise which our Lord made to the Apostles has been continued to their successors in the ministry: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."* It is an ordinance of Christ, which he will accompany with his blessing. It has been, and it will be, the effectual means of awakening the careless, of leading the convinced sinner to the Saviour, of comforting the dejected, of confirming the wavering, of conducting the saints from one degree of faith and holiness to another, till they "come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

There are some peculiar advantages in the mode of dispensing the word by preaching. A minister may be compared to a guide, who points out to the traveller objects which might have escaped his notice, and explains things which he might not have otherwise understood. It is not my meaning that the Scriptures are so dark as to need a commentary, and to be a sealed book to the unlearned. In all matters necessary to salvation, they are plain to every person of common capacity. But the truths of revelation, although they compose a regular system, all the parts of which are closely connected, are not delivered in a systematic form. They are scattered up and down in the Bible; and it requires attention and time to bring them together, and arrange them, that they may throw light upon one another, and exhibit in one view all the information communicated to us on the subject of religion. Besides, there are in the Scriptures things hard to be understood, subjects which are obscure from their own nature, or from their relation to other things, which no longer exist, or are not generally known, and which thus require learned and laborious research. Hence, it is necessary that there should be persons, who are fitted by their education, and bound by their profession, to engage in those inquiries; and at the same time enjoy leisure and retirement from the bustle of the world. Such a class of men is provided by the institution of the ministry; and as in the primitive times they were qualified for their office by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, the want of these must now be supplied by diligent study. Thus the preachers of the word are enabled to bring "out of their treasures things new and old;" to lay open the whole scheme of revelation; to illustrate what is dark; to solve what is difficult; to reconcile what seems contradictory; to display the connexion and harmony of Scripture; and to render every part of it subservient to the design of making the Christian perfect. The utility of the ministry does not absolutely depend upon the superior talents of the persons by whom its duties are performed. Suppose that their abilities should not be greater than those of some of their hearers, or should not even be equal, yet the latter may be benefited by their instructions; because their attention has been more directed to the subject, and they may be well conceived to understand better than others, a book which is their daily and principal study.

The preaching of the word possesses also this advantage, that the occasion, the place, the voice of the speaker, the solemnity and earnestness of his delivery, are calculated to make an impression. Ministers, indeed, however eloquent they may be, can operate only on the natural affections, and move them in various ways; but the circumstances already mentioned have an obvious tendency to excite attention to the truths of religion; and this state of mind is more favourable than the listlessness with which men often peruse their Bibles at home. This, however, is a secondary consid-

* Shorter Catechism, Q. 89. † 2 Tim. iii. 15.

* Matth. xxviii. 20.

eration, which will not account for the success with which the preaching of the word is attended.

It should be remembered that, when we represent the word, read and heard, as contributing to accomplish the salvation of sinners, we consider it only as a mean, the success of which is owing to a power that works unseen. Rational arguments will convince the understanding, and the descriptions and appeals of eloquence will move the affections; but the heart, even the word of God, when left alone, is not able to change. There is no virtue in its terms more than in those of ordinary language. Its subjects, indeed, are the most interesting that were ever presented to human contemplation; but the mind is so blind that it does not perceive their excellence, and the heart is so corrupt that it cannot relish them. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

To ensure the success of his word, God has promised the Holy Spirit to accompany it; and it is his office to remove the veil which hides its glories from our eyes, and the obstacles which prevent its entrance into our hearts. If there is an incapacity in men to discern spiritual things, it cannot be remedied but by supernatural influence; as a man born blind cannot be made to see but by the same power which created the light and the eye. Whence is it that men who have been trained to accurate thinking, and are capable of perceiving the evidence and estimating the importance of religion, do often disregard its truths, and even treat them with contempt; while others of far inferior ability discover the marks of a Divine origin in the Gospel, and give it a cordial reception? Whence is it that it fixes the attention of the giddy, but escapes the notice of the thoughtful; and that of the members of a family who have been educated in reverence for it, and upon whom its lessons have been frequently and solemnly inculcated, one, it may be, believes, while the rest continue indifferent to its truths? These things, I think, cannot be accounted for, but by the Scripture doctrine of grace, which operates according to its sovereign will; for if the word possessed a power in itself to convert the soul, we might expect the change to be accomplished in every case where the means were used with equal diligence, and the effect to be greatest in those who were predisposed by the superior cultivation of their faculties. Upon no other principle can we explain other facts in the history of religion; as, that the word of God should at last engage the serious attention of a person who had, for a long series of years, discovered the utmost indifference to it; and that it should make a sudden impression, like a flash of lightning betokened by no appearance of the sky, but an impression which ever after remains. It is evident that now the time of gracious visitation is come. The man is the same as he ever was, and the truths are the same which he has repeatedly heard; but a new power attends them, by which his attention is arrested, and his mind is convinced. While the word was left to work by its own power, it effected nothing; but now it proves mighty through God, and brings every thought into captivity to Christ. When Paul preached to the women of Philippi, who were assembled for prayer, they all heard; but of one the historian says,—"A certain woman named Lydia heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."† And this is the true account of every conversion. The change is secretly effected, by the Spirit of God concurring with the word. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but it is God that giveth the increase.‡

* 1 Cor. ii. 14. † Acts xvi. 14. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 7.

LECTURE LXXXVI.

ON THE SACRAMENTS.

Definition of the Term.—Their Nature and Design.—Account of them.—Observations on their Origin; their Significancy; how they are to be Used, and by Whom; and the Source of their Efficacy, not Affected by the Intention of the Administrator.

The word of God read and heard, is the principal mean which is employed for the salvation of men. We have spoken of it at some length in the preceding lectures, and shall now proceed to consider the other means which concur with the word, to accomplish the gracious designs of heaven with respect to believers. However beneficial they are, they are not all of equal necessity with the word, and are to be viewed as auxiliaries to it. It is by the word alone that faith is produced, and the seeds of holiness are sown in the heart. The office of the other ordinances to which I refer, is to assist in maintaining and strengthening faith, and in rearing the Christian graces to maturity. There is no doubt that men might be saved without the sacraments, if they were placed in such circumstances that they could not enjoy them; but we have no authority to say that they might be saved without the word.

As I am now to enter upon the consideration of the Sacraments, it is proper to begin with a definition of the term. A Sacrament is defined to be "the visible form of invisible grace." Others have called it "a sign and seal of the grace of God in Christ;" or more fully, "a visible sign and seal, divinely instituted, to signify and seal to our consciences the promises of grace in Christ, and to engage us to faith and obedience to God." The Church of England says, in the twenty-fifth Article, "Sacraments ordained of Christ, be not only badges and tokens of Christian men's profession; but rather, they be certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace, and God's good-will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him." The doctrine of our own Church on this subject, is thus expressed in the Confession of Faith:—"Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him; as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ according to his word."* There is a more concise definition in the Shorter Catechism: "A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers."† These definitions, which are virtually the same, are substantially true; but are objectionable on this ground, that they are founded on too limited a view of the subject. As definitions of the sacraments of the New Testament, they are right; but their particularity renders them not strictly applicable to sacraments in general. It will afterwards appear that there are other Divine institutions to which the name of sacrament may be given, besides baptism and the Lord's supper, and even circumcision and the passover. I would therefore prefer a more general definition, and say, that a sacrament is a sign and seal of the promises of God, a visible institution, by which we are assured that the blessing promised will be bestowed upon those to whom the promise is made.

The word Sacrament, which has been adopted into the language of the church, is not found in the Scriptures. Use has rendered it sacred, insomuch that if any person should object to it, he would run the risk of being accounted profane. He might

* Conf. xxvii. 1. † Quest. 92.

with propriety be called scrupulous and whimsical, or might be suspected of affecting singularity, but for the charge of profaneness there would be no foundation; because the term, being of human origin, may be set aside at any time, if another more convenient were discovered. Sacrament is a word borrowed from the Latin language, in which it bears different significations. First, it denotes the sum of money which each of the parties in a law-suit was required to lay down at the commencement, and which, being forfeited by the party who was cast, was devoted to sacred uses, and hence was called *sacramentum*. Secondly, it signifies an oath, on account of its sacred nature; and particularly the oath by which the Roman soldiers bound themselves "to obey their commander in all things to the utmost of their power, to be ready to attend whenever he ordered their appearance, and never to leave the army but with his consent." It is supposed that in this sense it was anciently applied to the symbolical institutions of the church, because in these, we, as it were, enlist under the banner of Jesus Christ, and engage to follow him whithersoever he leads us; and this idea is brought forward almost in every book and every sermon on the subject of the sacraments. I have long been disposed to doubt whether this is the true account of the ecclesiastical application of the term. In the writings of the early Christians it received a new meaning, of which I believe there is no example in the classics. It signifies *a mystery*, as every person knows who is conversant with the ancient records of the church, and as any of you may learn by looking into the Vulgate translation. To give you a few examples: "Great is the mystery of godliness,"* is there rendered, "Great is the sacrament of godliness"—"*magnum est pietatis sacramentum;*" for the words of Paul subjoined to the account of the institution of marriage, "This is a great mystery, but I speak of Christ and the church;"† we have, "This is a great sacrament,"—*sacramentum hoc magnum est;* and in the Revelation, "The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest in my right hand," is "the sacrament of the seven stars,"‡—*sacramentum septem stellarum.* This is the translation of the word μυστηριον, which was used by the Greeks to denote not only the profound and incomprehensible doctrines of the Trinity, and the incarnation, but also baptism and the Lord's supper, and especially the latter, which was called ἀγιον μυστηριον;‖ partly no doubt because under external symbols spiritual blessings were veiled, but partly also on account of the secret manner in which it was celebrated. As the heathens had their mysteries, to which none but the initiated were admitted; so the church came at an early period to allow none to be present when the Lord's supper was administered, but the baptized; and Heathens, Jews, excommunicated persons, and catechumens, were excluded. Now, I think it probable that the word *mystery* having been used by the Greeks to express baptism and the Lord's supper, and the word *sacrament* having been used by the Latins as synonymous with mystery, it is in this way that we are to account for its application to those symbolical institutions. The sacraments are the mysteries of our religion. I do not deny at the same time, that the other sense of the word may have had some influence, as there are occasional allusions in the writings of the ancients to the military oath in speaking of the sacraments.

Before leaving this topic I would observe, that what has been said concerning the meaning of the word Sacrament, will throw light upon a passage in the celebrated letter of the younger Pliny to the Emperor Trajan.§ Speaking of the Christians, who are the subject of the letter, he says, that they were accustomed to meet on a stated day, and sing a hymn to Christ as God,—*sequæ sacramento obstringere,—to bind themselves by an oath,* (according to the common translation,) not to commit any crime, &c. I have no doubt that the word was used by Pliny to signify an oath; but I suspect that he was led into an error by taking it in its usual acceptation, and not knowing the peculiar sense which it had received among the Christians, from some of whom he had derived his information. When they told him that in their meetings they were wont *se sacramento obstringere,* he understood *sacramentum* to be an oath, while they used it to express the sacred supper, in which the disciples of Christ engage to renounce the works of wickedness, and to follow after righteousness and godliness. This interpretation is the more probable, as no other writer has made mention of an oath sworn by the Christians in their religious assemblies; but we learn from Justin Martyr, that on a stated day, or the first day of the week, they did assemble to observe the ordinances of the Gospel, and in particular to commemorate the death of Christ in obedience to his command.* This was the *sacramentum* of which Pliny had heard, without knowing what it meant; and if I am right in thus explaining it, we have here an early example of this peculiar sense of the term.

It is probable then, that the symbolic ordinances of our religion were called sacraments, not as is commonly supposed, in allusion to the oath which the Roman soldiers took to be obedient to their general, but because they were considered as mysteries, on account either of the recondite sense of the symbols, or of the air of mystery with which the sacred supper was celebrated in the ancient church.

In a Sacrament, two things are to be considered; the sign, and the thing signified. The sign is something material and visible, something addressed to the senses; and by this a sacrament is distinguished from other religious institutions. There is no such sign in prayer and praise, and the preaching of the gospel; but these consist in the use of words as expressive of certain truths, and certain sentiments and affections of the mind. The thing signified is the privilege or blessing, of which the sign reminds and assures us, and which it represents by its nature, its use, the form of administering it, or by positive institution, in consequence of which both are associated in our thoughts. The typical ordinances of the law thus far resembled sacraments, that they exhibited a sign by which something spiritual was signified; but they differed from them in this respect, that they were not confirmations of the promises, but adumbrations of future events, figurative representations of the future ratification of the covenant by the sufferings and death of the Messiah. The form of a sacrament is by some made to consist in the words which accompany the administration of it, but seems to be more accurately stated by others to consist in the union established between the sign and the thing signified, by the divine institution or promise. This union implies three things; that the sign becomes significant, whereas it would otherwise have conveyed no idea of any thing but itself; that it assures us of the blessing or privilege which it represents; and that it actually exhibits the blessing to be enjoyed by those who rightly use the sacrament. From this union arises what has been called sacramental phraseology, or, certain expressions in which the names of the sign and the thing signified are exchanged. Thus, the name of the sign is given to the thing signified, when Christ is called "our passover;"† and the name of the thing signified is given to the sign, when the bread is called the body

* 1 Tim. iii. 16. † Eph. v. 32. ‡ Rev. i. 20.
‖ A holy mystery. § Plin. Epist. Lib. ii. 10.

* Justin. Mart. Apolog. Secund. † 1 Cor. v. 7.

of Christ. The foundation of this interchange is the sacramental union, which so couples them together that the one may be predicated of the other. In the same manner the union of the two natures in the person of Christ gives rise to those propositions, in which the properties of one nature are affirmed of his whole person, or even of the other nature, without implying any mixture or confusion of the natures themselves.

The reason why God has instituted sacraments, is his condescension to our infirmity. "He knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust." Although it is the design of religion to withdraw us from the government of our senses, yet since it does not propose to make us totally different creatures, and since, from our natural constitution, our senses have a powerful and necessary influence upon us, he has been pleased to render them subservient to the purposes of religion. What we hear does often awaken very strong emotions in our minds; but it is an old remark, that the impressions of the eye are more vivid than those of the ear.

> Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,
> Quem quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.*

"If thou wert an incorporeal being," says Chrysostom, "God would have delivered his gifts to thee naked and incorporeal; but since thy soul is connected with a body, he has delivered things intellectual by sensible signs." When we are disposed to doubt what we hear, the sacraments present themselves to our eyes, and are put into our hands, to assure us by our sight, and touch, and taste, that what the word has told us is true. The word speaks to all; but the sacraments single out individuals, and assure them that, if they are used aright, the blessings which they represent belong to them in particular. In contracts or covenants between man and man, it has been an ancient practice for the parties to ratify them with their respective seals. God entering into covenant with us, has added sacraments as seals for the confirmation of it, not to bind himself more strongly, as if it had been possible that he should retract; but to give a pledge of the performance of the promises, which should be satisfactory to us, because conformable to our usages. If our faith were perfect, we may presume that sacraments would not be necessary. They are therefore, as I have said, an accommodation to our infirmity.

Before I proceed to make other observations upon the nature and design of sacraments, I shall briefly give an account of those which God has annexed to the covenants into which he has entered with mankind.

A learned author has supposed that there were four seals or sacraments of the covenant made with our first parent, and that these were the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, paradise, the Sabbath, and the tree of life.† I apprehend that in representing them as so many, he has consulted imagination more than judgment. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is entirely out of the question, because it was the subject of the condition of the covenant, which is manifestly a thing totally different from a seal. Paradise and the Sabbath are equally objectionable, because Adam enjoyed both while he was performing the condition; and it would be absurd to suppose his right to the promised reward to have been confirmed by a sacrament, before his course of obedience was completed. If there was a seal of the covenant, Adam, while the trial was going on, could only be permitted to look at it as a pledge that the blessing would be bestowed when the trial was finished. But he was in possession of paradise; and the Sabbath, with its holy exercises and heavenly delights, was made for him. It remains, therefore, that the tree of life alone can be considered as a sacrament or seal; and that it may be viewed in this light, we may infer from the reason assigned for his expulsion from the garden, "lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever;"* words which import that the tree was an emblem of the life which he should have enjoyed had he completed his course of obedience, and that by eating its fruit his title would have been confirmed. Having transgressed the covenant, he had no right to the seal, and he was removed from its vicinity, lest he should have dared to profane it.

The next covenant of God with the human race was made after the flood, when he promised that water should not again cover the earth. Strictly this was not a covenant, because there was no stipulation; nothing was prescribed to man to be done, and the performance of the promise depended solely upon the faithfulness of God. But the original word is used with considerable latitude, to denote not only a covenant, properly so called, but a promise or a divine institution even when it relates to inanimate things. Thus God speaks of his "covenant of the day and of the night."† "I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token" or sign "of the covenant: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth."‡ The rainbow was the sign, or seal, or sacrament, of this covenant, for these words mean the same thing. Some have very unnecessarily perplexed themselves with inquiring how the rainbow could be a sign, if Noah had formerly seen it; and if he had never seen it before, how we shall account for it not having appeared, as the natural causes of it must have existed from the beginning. There is no doubt, that if there were clouds before the deluge, there must have been rainbows, unless they had been prevented by a miracle, the supposition of which is absurd. But there was no reason for preventing them from being formed at an earlier period; because it is not necessary to constitute any thing a sign, that it should be new. We may presume that the tree of life stood in the garden of Eden before God made a covenant with Adam, that it existed before it was a seal; so likewise did the rainbow; but while formerly it was only a natural phenomenon, it henceforth was appropriated to a sacred use, and acquired a new signification. When we see it in the heavens, we ought to remember that it ratifies the ancient promise, that mankind shall not again suffer the punishment which was inflicted upon the inhabitants of the antediluvian world.

The covenant which God made with Abraham and his posterity was confirmed by circumcision. "Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you."‖ To this the passover was afterwards added at the time of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, if, as as it is commonly accounted, it was a seal of the covenant of God with them as his peculiar people. "It shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth; for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year."§ The particular consideration of these I shall

* Horat. Ars Poet. Things received by the ear affect the mind more languidly than those which are submitted to the faithful eyes.

† Witsius de Œconom. Fed. Lib. I. cap. vi.

* Gen. iii. 22. † Jer. xxxiii. 20. ‡ Gen. ix. 11—13.
‖ Gen. xvii. 11. § Exod. xiii. 9, 10.

reserve to another opportunity. They were abolished with the system to which they belonged; but the new dispensation is not destitute of the usual appendage of sacraments. They are equally necessary as formerly to confirm the promises of God, and to promote the consolation of his people; and they constitute a part of the system of religious worship which Jesus Christ has given to his church. The two sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's Supper, which will be afterwards considered. An explanation of their nature, and the discussion of the controversies to which they have given rise, will lead us into a detail which will occupy several lectures.

In the remainder of this lecture, I shall lay before you some general observations upon sacraments, with a view to illustrate their origin, nature, and design.

First, All sacraments are of divine institution. The rainbow, as I have already remarked, must have been often seen prior to the flood; but then it was merely an object of wonder to the ignorant, and of curious inquiry to men of science. Nothing was indicated by it, but that the sun was shining in one quarter of the heavens, and in the opposite region there were clouds, which refracted and reflected his rays. It was the divine institution which made it significant, and converted it into an assurance of protection by almighty power from a universal inundation. From the same source, the tree of life, and the sacraments of the Old and the New Testament, derived their symbolical meaning and their authority. Had not God set them apart to a religious use, the tree of life would have conveyed no more information to Adam, than any other tree in the garden; and the elements in the Christian sacraments would have afforded as little support to our faith, as the water with which we daily wash our hands, and the bread and wine which we use at our ordinary meals. And here I may mention by the way, what I omitted in its proper place, and the sacraments of the Christian Church, furnish a proof that the sign or seal of a covenant is not necessarily a new thing; for nothing is more common than the substances employed as figures or emblems, and they are used in the same manner as in the ordinary occasions of life. In every covenant between God and man he makes the promise, and therefore he only can confirm it. It would be high presumption in any person to come forward with his devices in aid of the divine faithfulness; because his interposition would imply, either that the word of God was not worthy of credit in itself, or that he was acquainted with an expedient to make its truth more apparent, and to remove the doubts and suspicions which the human mind is too apt to entertain. Hence we condemn the conduct of the Church of Rome, which has multiplied the number of the sacraments to seven, while no man, who takes the Scripture as his guide, can find any more than two. The authority of man has here intruded into the exclusive province of God. However august and sacred these additional sacraments may be in the eyes of the deluded votaries of ignorance and superstition, it is certain that they represent no grace, and can convey no blessing, and ought to be considered as bold corruptions of the purity and simplicity of the Christian ritual.

Secondly, The signs which God has appointed to ratify his covenant are significant; that is, they are fitted by their nature and qualities to represent the blessings which he has promised to bestow. The bow is never seen but in the time of rain, or when there are watery clouds in the sky; and it is a sure sign that the clouds, which have overspread the heavens, are passing away, and that the sun is again looking forth upon the earth. Thus it is naturally adapted to the purpose of its constitution, which is to declare that a second deluge is not to be apprehended. The tree of life, whatever it was, no doubt produced excellent fruit; and although, amidst the ravings of folly, nothing is more absurd than the supposition that it possessed a virtue to make men immortal, yet, from its nutritious and invigorating quality, it was an expressive emblem of the immortality which Adam would have enjoyed through the will and power of his Creator. Water, which purifies our bodies and our garments from the filth which they have contracted, is a lively figure in baptism of the influences of the Holy Spirit, which wash our souls from sin, so often represented under the image of uncleanness. Nothing could have been more properly chosen to signify the efficacy of our Saviour's atonement, in giving life and joy to our souls, than bread, the staff of life, and wine, the exhilarating and strengthening quality of which was expressed in an ancient parable, where it is said "to cheer God and men." Hence you see with what wisdom the signs and seals of God's covenants have been selected. They are not altogether arbitrary, so that no connexion subsists between them and the things which they signify, but what arises from positive institution. There is an analogy or resemblance, in consequence of which the signs remind us of the blessings exhibited by them, without any effort of ingenuity on our part. Thus our senses minister to our salvation. We are necessarily conversant with material objects, and it is a gracious provision which has given them a meaning and a use, by which our thoughts are led to heavenly objects. Nature becomes the image of grace; and the impressions of external things, under the plastic power of religion, spiritualize our minds, and promote the interests of divine life in our souls.

Thirdly, The signs or seals which God has annexed to his covenants, are assurances on his part that the blessings promised in them shall be enjoyed. This is their proper design. They are intended for the satisfaction of those with whom the covenants are made. God speaks thus of the rainbow, "And the bow shall be in the clouds; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."* Accommodating his language to our conceptions, he represents the bow as a token which would remind him of his covenant, while the meaning evidently is, that the bow would remind us of it; and that, as long as it appears in the sky, we have no reason to fear that his promise will fail. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are securities to those who have a right to them, that they shall enjoy the privileges which the ordinances respectively exhibit. The one declares that God gives them his spirit as a purifier, to cleanse their souls from sin, and to prepare them for the kingdom of heaven; and the other seals their interest in the death of Christ, and their title to its precious fruits. We may remark by the way, that the doctrine of the Church of Rome, according to which there is a conversion of the bread and wine in the Eucharist into the body and blood of our Saviour, destroys the essence of a sacrament, which is a visible sign of an invisible grace. Transubstantiation gives us the thing signified, and leaves only a false appearance of the sign. The Lord's Supper, in the Church of Rome, is therefore no sacrament at all. The sacraments of the new covenant are not the proposed blessings themselves, but symbolical representations of them; nor does it appear, although the common opinion and the common way of explaining them are different, that they are properly designed to communicate the blessings of the covenant, but that their office is to assure us that they shall be communicated. The intention of them may be explained by the following words: "God, willing more abundantly to show unto

* Gen. ix. 16.

the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."* His simple promise is worthy of implicit credit. He might have refused to give us any other security, and it would have been impious on our part to demand it, because, by doing so, we should have impeached his veracity; yet, placing himself as it were, on a level with us, he has voluntarily given the highest confirmation of his word which we could ask from one of our fellow-men, of whose integrity we entertained a suspicion. He has not only promised, but sworn. In like manner, and with the same design, he has first declared his good will to us through Jesus Christ in the Gospel, and then has exhibited his grace to us in sacraments, applying it to us in external signs, and so binding himself to communicate it to our souls.

Fourthly, While all sacraments are intended to be used for the ends of the institution, the mode of using them is not always the same. Some are only to be looked at; some are externally applied to the body; and some are designed for its nourishment. The seal of the covenant with Noah is used by looking at it; and as the covenant was made with all men, in whatever region of the earth they reside, it is placed in the heavens that all may have an opportunity to observe it. In baptism, water is not only exhibited, but sprinkled or poured upon the person; and in circumcision, the sign of the covenant was impressed upon the body. In the Lord's Supper, bread and wine are presented, not to be gazed at with distant reverence, but to be eaten and drank; and in the passover, a lamb was killed and roasted with fire, and the Israelites feasted upon it. It follows that those are highly culpable who are disqualified for using sacraments to their proper ends, by ignorance of their nature and design. Such are they who regard them as mere ceremonies, of little importance, in themselves, although entitled to a respectful observance as institutions of religion; and they who ascribe to them a purpose which was not contemplated by their Author. To this censure those are subject, who imagine that baptism is effectual by the simple application, and regenerates every child to whom it is administered; and those who substitute the Lord's Supper in the room of the sacrifice of the cross, and trust in it as a sort of atonement for their sins. They, too, cannot be excused, who, knowing that the sacraments are intended for use, live in the habitual neglect of them, or at least, of the sacrament of the Supper. Does not their conduct imply that this ordinance is superfluous? or is it a virtual declaration that they do not consider themselves as having an interest in the covenant of which it is a seal? The common apology is, that they are destitute of the necessary qualifications; and in the case of many, it may be true. It is a fact, however, not to be rested on as an excuse, but to be deplored; and it is calculated to excite serious alarm, for they who have not a right to the seal, have not a right to the blessings of redemption.

Fifthly, Sacraments are intended for the use of those alone with whom the covenants to which they are appended are made. The covenant of preservation from a second deluge was made with all mankind, and the sign of it appears in the clouds, where every eye may see it. Circumcision was the distinguishing mark of the seed of Abraham, whom God had chosen to be his peculiar people; and, if the passover be considered as another seal of that covenant, we know that no stranger was permitted to eat of it. Baptism and the Eucharist exclusively belong to the disciples of Christ, as distinguished from heathens, Mahometans, and Jews. Infants receive baptism, as having been admitted into the covenant with their parents; and both ordinances are to be administered to such adults alone as, by a credible profession of faith, appear to be the people of God. But it is necessary to proceed farther, and to state that a credible profession gives a right to the sacraments only in the judgment of the Church; and that, in the sight of God, none have a right to them but believers and holy persons. Hence, the members of the Church are exhorted to examine themselves, to ascertain their state and character before they go to the holy table, "lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves."* As the sacraments of the new covenant ought not to be administered to any person who may not be presumed to be a saint; so, however favourable the appearances are, if he who receives them is not a genuine Christian, he is an usurper of privileges to which he has no title. In all such cases, the sacraments are like seals affixed to a blank. Their declared meaning is unaltered; but in the present application they signify nothing. They do not, and cannot, confirm the blessings of salvation to the man who does not believe. What have they to do with the securities that the promises shall be performed, by whom the promises have not been embraced? What have they to do with the pledges of our Saviour's love, and of eternal redemption, whose affections are engaged by the pleasures of sin, and whose days are spent in the pursuits of the world?

Lastly, The efficacy of sacraments depends solely upon the Divine blessing, whether we consider them as channels in which grace is conveyed, or as means appointed to confirm the faith and promote the consolation of the people of God. This concluding observation relates to the Christian sacraments, with respect to which strange notions are maintained by the Church of Rome, in direct contradiction to the proposition now laid down. There are two opinions to which it is opposed; that the sacraments, when rightly administered, are effectual in themselves; and that, to the right administration, the intention of the administrator is necessary. Thus the Council of Trent has decreed: "If any man shall say, that the sacraments of the new law do not contain the grace which they signify, or do not confer grace upon those who do not oppose an obstacle to it, as if they were only external signs of grace or righteousness received by faith: let him be accursed."† Again, "If any man shall say, that grace is not conferred by the sacraments of the new law themselves, *ex opere operato*, but that faith alone in the Divine promise is sufficient to obtain grace: let him be accursed."‡ This barbarous phrase, *opus operatum*, which is utterly unintelligible without an explanation, signifies the external celebration of the sacraments. It has been defined by Popish writers to be the performance of the external work, without any internal motion; and sacraments have been said to confer grace *ex opere operato*, because, besides the exhibition and application of the sign, no good motion is necessary in the receiver. All that is required is, that no obstacle shall be opposed to the reception of grace, and the only obstacle is mortal sin. But as sins of this class are reduced by the Roman casuists to a very small number,—all others being accounted venial,—the exceptions to the efficacy of the sacraments which are made by this negative qualification, are quite inconsiderable. Thus the sacraments are converted into a species of magical charms, which work in some mysterious way, without the concurrence of the patient; and the exercise of the intellect and the will, of the rational and moral faculties of man, is excluded. I should think that, according to this doctrine, they would do as much good to the receiver when he is asleep as when

* Heb. vi. 17, 18.

* 1 Cor. xi. 29.

† Sessio vii. *De Sacramentis in genere*, Canon vi.

‡ Ibid. Canon viii.

he is awake. It is vain to ask any proof of this doctrine from Scripture, for none is to be found. It is vain to ask how its abettors can reconcile to philosophy and common sense the idea, that a material substance, by a particular mode of application, shall produce a spiritual effect upon the soul. It is one of the mysteries of the church which she cannot explain. If it shall be said, that God has so connected his grace with the sacraments, that it shall be infallibly communicated when they are administered; we have a right to demand some more proof than an assertion, that he has in this instance divested himself of his sovereign power over his own gifts, and committed the absolute disposal of them to the ministers of religion; or, that he has introduced into this part of religion a mechanical process, instead of the moral economy which prevails in all the other parts of it. The Gospel does not produce its effects *ex opere operato*, or by the mere sound of the words in our ears, but by the power of the Spirit opening the understanding and heart to receive it. What ground is there for supposing that the mode of operation is different in the sacraments? or, that here alone these words are not true, "Neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase?"* In opposition to this absurd and impious tenet, we maintain that sacraments do not work grace physically, as if they possessed some intrinsic energy; but morally and hyper-physically, as signs and seals which God accompanies with his blessing. The doctrine of our Church, as declared in its standards, is, that "the grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them," but "by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit."†

There is another error opposed to the proposition, that the efficacy of sacraments depends upon the blessing of God, which makes their efficacy and validity depend upon the intention of the administrator. The Church of Rome pronounces a curse upon any man who shall say, that "there is not required in the ministers who celebrate them, an intention to do what the church does."‡ Now, the church not only goes through the external forms of the sacraments, but means that they should be true sacraments and should communicate grace to the receivers. If a priest have not this intention, the form only of a sacrament exists; the essence is wanting. Great disputes have arisen in the Church of Rome with respect to this intention; whether it should be an actual intention; formally arising in the mind at the time; whether a habitual intention will not suffice; or, whether it is not enough that it is virtual, that is, that the priest have formerly had this intention, and is disposed to have it, although from some cause he has it not actually at present. In one thing all are agreed, that, if the intention is wholly wanting, if the priest positively intends that the sacrament which he is celebrating shall not be a sacrament, it has no validity,—is a mere sign without the substance. In this case the child is not regenerated in baptism, as Papists suppose all children rightly baptized to be; and the bread and wine in the Eucharist are not converted into the body and blood of Christ, but continue what they were. It is not necessary that I should point out the gross impiety of a doctrine which subjects Divine institutions to the arbitrary pleasure of men, who have power to defeat the design of Jesus Christ in giving them to the church, and are constituted the sovereign dispensers of his grace. The priests of Rome have an absolute controul over Omnipotence, and can exert it in the miracle of transubstantiation, or restrain it, according to their perverse inclinations. It was never pretended that the intention of the preacher is necessary to give efficacy to the word; and it is altogether arbitrary to suppose it to be necessary to the efficacy of the sacraments. As the latter were instituted by God and not by men, nothing besides his blessing can rationally be conceived to be requisite to accomplish their design, but the administration of them according to the prescribed form. The intention of the administrator has as little to do with the effect, as the intention of the physician has with the success of the medicine which he gives to his patient, or the intention of the husbandman with the fertility of the soil. God has not suspended our salvation upon the precarious volition of other men, over whom we have no power.

The consequences of this doctrine are perplexing and alarming in the highest degree to the members of the Church of Rome. As it is impossible to know the intention of their priests, they can never be certain that they have received any of the sacraments. It is possible that they have not been baptized and therefore cannot be saved. If an unbaptized person is made a priest, all his actions in that character are invalid; all the sacraments which he administers are vain ceremony. If he is a bishop, those whom he ordains are not priests; and if he is Pope, the bishops whom he consecrates have no more power than laymen. No Papist can tell whether the elements in the Eucharist have been transubstantiated or not; and, for aught that he knows, they are simple bread and wine, and in adoring them, he is upon his own principle guilty of idolatry. In short, according to the doctrine of intention, the Church of Rome may be no Church, and the Pope, the bishops, and the priests, may all be usurpers of offices to which they have no title. Let them relieve themselves from this difficulty as they can; they have made the snare in which they are caught. We believe that "the efficacy of a sacrament does not depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, but upon the work of the Spirit and the word of institution."*

LECTURE LXXXVII.

ON THE SACRAMENTS.

Consequences of the Popish Doctrine concerning the Intention of the Priest in Sacraments.—The Sacraments of the Mosaic Dispensation.—Circumcision, its Origin, Form and Import.—The Passover, Proof that it was a Sacrament; its Form and Significancy.—The Jewish Superseded by the Christian Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.—The Five Spurious Sacraments of the Church of Rome.

In the last lecture, I explained the nature of sacraments, and made some general observations upon them. My last observation was, that the efficacy of Sacraments depends upon the blessing of God, and it was opposed to two errors of the Church of Rome, that sacraments communicate grace *ex opere operato*, or by the mere administration of them, without any exercise of mind on the part of the receiver, if he is not in mortal sin; and that the intention of the priest to do what the church does, is indispensably necessary to give them validity. We have seen, that as the latter opinion is unscriptural and impious, so it involves its abettors in the most painful uncertainty, and is an engine powerful enough to overturn the whole fabric of their church. It is possible that, from the want of intention in their present priests, they have no sacraments; and that, from the same want in a former race of them, their present priests are not priests, their bishops are not bishops, their pope is not the vicar of Christ. Their religious offices may be performed by

* 1 Cor. iii. 7. † Conf. xxvii. 3. Sh. Cat. Q. 91.
‡ Con. Trid. Ses. vii. *de Sac. in gen.* can. xi.

* Conf. xxvii. 3.

men who have not been baptized, and therefore are not Christians; and they may be daily guilty of the grossest idolatry, in worshipping bread and wine, which they suppose to be the body and blood of our Saviour. If it should be said that it is altogether incredible, that a whole generation of priests should conspire to defeat the design of the sacraments, still, the uncertainty remains with respect to individual cases. How does any man know, that the priest who baptized him had the proper intention, or that the priest had it, by whom that priest was baptized? If there was a single failure in the line of succession, from the Apostles down to the present time, all that followed were unchristianized. Men of different characters may be supposed to have existed in that succession, and if some were upright, others were wicked. There may have belonged to it such priests as Luther met with at Rome before he appeared as a reformer; men who made a jest of sacred things, and annulled the sacraments with a deliberate design. He tells us that, in celebrating the Lord's Supper, some of them, instead of repeating the words of institution, *hoc est corpus meum*,* by which transubstantiation is supposed to be effected, said with a low voice, *Panis es, et panis eris. Bread thou art, and bread thou shalt be.*

It may surprise us that the Church of Rome should have adopted an opinion clogged with such difficulties, and leading to such consequences; and it may be thought that she has been drawn into it inadvertently. But whether or not the matter was well considered when it was first made an article of faith, it was not re-enacted by the Council of Trent without opposition. Yet, although the inferences deducible from it were represented to the fathers, they passed the decree formerly quoted, not choosing to acknowledge the fallibility of the church, by revoking one of its dogmas, nor to abandon a tenet so well calculated to increase the power and influence of the clergy. This is probably the origin of the doctrine of intention, and is certainly the reason why it is retained. The great object of the Church of Rome is, to create a sacred reverence for its ministers, and to establish their uncontrolled dominion over the people; and nothing can be conceived more effectual for this purpose, than the belief that they can make or not make sacraments at their pleasure; that they can communicate or withhold the grace of God; that, in short, the salvation of the people is subject to their disposal. Join the two opinions which we have considered together, and you will perceive in both an artful but wicked contrivance, to reduce the minds of men to a state of spiritual slavery under their yoke. The sacraments are effectual *ex opere operato*, or, by simple application convey grace to the receiver; and the priest can make them sacraments or empty ceremonies as he chooses. How august, in the eyes of the ignorant and superstitious, must those men appear, who can open or shut the treasury of heaven; who have power to turn material substances into the body, blood, and divinity of Christ, by a few words, muttered like a magical incantation!

In the preceding lecture, I gave a short account of the signs or sacraments appointed to confirm the covenants which God has made with men. I then mentioned those of the Old Testament, which have been superseded by the seals of the Christian dispensation. The brief notice which was taken of them was sufficient at that time; but it will be now proper to attend to them more particularly.

The first in order is circumcision, which is called the token or sign of the covenant with Abraham.† It was then first instituted, or at least it then first became significant, and it was enjoined upon the Israelites as a rite to be observed in all their generations. Hence our Lord said to the Jews, "Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision, not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers."* Herodotus affirms that the Colchians, and Egyptians, and Ethiopians, alone of all men practise circumcision. The Phenicians and Syrians in Palestine acknowledge that they learned it from the Egyptians.† It is not surprising, that infidels should eagerly lay hold of this account to contradict the relation of Moses; but it is surprising, that persons, professing to be Christians should have discovered a disposition to give credit to the profane, in preference to the inspired historian. The account of Herodotus is manifestly false; for, first, he asserts that the Phenicians practised circumcision, contrary to a well known fact, that all the inhabitants of Palestine except the Jews were uncircumcised; and, secondly, he says that they owned that they received it from the Egyptians, whereas it is certain, that the Jews never acknowledged any such thing. Laying aside the divine authority of the history of Moses, it is astonishing that any man should have ever lent an ear to Herodotus on this subject. For what, I ask, did he know about the matter? Nothing but some idle tales, which he had heard from persons as ignorant as himself. It should be remembered, that Herodotus wrote about fourteen hundred years after the institution of circumcision according to the Scriptures, and was therefore totally incompetent to decide concerning its origin.

The circumcision of a child took place on the eighth day after his birth, and was performed by the father of the family, or by any other person whom he chose to employ. While it constituted a visible proof that the person was one of the descendants of Abraham, and consequently was comprehended in the covenant which God had made with that patriarch and his seed, it was significant of certain spiritual blessings, to which those who, like him, believed in God, were admitted. To Abraham, it was "a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised."‡ Before this rite was instituted, Abraham had "believed in God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness;"‖ and circumcision was a confirmation of the righteousness which he had obtained by faith, or of his justified state, and of the blessings and privileges connected with it. God had promised the Messiah to him and his seed, and, along with the Messiah, not only temporal, but spiritual and heavenly blessings; and Abraham, embracing this promise, had engaged to walk before God, and to be perfect. Of this covenant, the sign and seal was circumcision; a declaration to his believing descendants, as well as to himself, that to them the promises belonged, while it implied a profession on their part of their trust in the illustrious seed, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed; and hence to them, as well as to him, it was a seal of the righteousness of faith. We could not conceive the Most High to have enjoined this rite solely for the purpose of displaying his authority. We may not be able to explain satisfactorily why he fixed upon it in preference to any other; but we must believe that something more was intended than merely to set a mark upon the Israelites. Like all his other signs, it was significant, if not by its own nature, yet in consequence of his institution.

I proceed to observe, that as it was a seal of the righteousness of faith, so it was also a sign of the renovation of the heart. This is evident, on the one hand, from those passages which speak of the "circumcision of the heart" as the work of God, and as necessary to our loving him; and, on the other hand, from those which call depravity the "foreskin of the

* This is my body. † Gen. xvii. 11.

* John vii. 22. † Herodot. lib. ii. c. 104.
‡ Rom. iv. 11. ‖ Gen. xv. 6.

heart," and represent the wicked as "uncircumcised in heart."* In these passages, we have examples of what is called sacramental language, according to which the sign is put for the thing signified, and the thing signified, for the sign. The expressions quoted would have been unintelligible, if circumcision had been simply a mark on the body to distinguish one nation from another. It is plain that it was instituted for another purpose, and that the Israelites understood that a spiritual meaning was couched under it. There was an internal circumcision necessary to render them the seed of Abraham according to the promise, and full heirs of the blessings of the covenant. The New Testament confirms this view of the rite, when describing believers in Christ as having undergone the change which it signified, it says, "In whom also," that is, in Christ, "ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."† To the same purpose are the words of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans: "For he is not a Jew that is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."‡

While circumcision was a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith, and of the regeneration of the heart, it laid those to whom it was administered, under an obligation to live according to the law of the covenant, into which they had been admitted. They became bound to observe all the ordinances of God, and to obey all the commands which he had given to his people; "Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision."‖ The circumcised were engaged to cultivate purity of heart and conduct; to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts; to keep at a distance from the world lying in wickedness, from which they were separated by a visible mark of distinction; and as they always carried about the sign of the covenant, to behave in every place, and on every occasion, like persons dedicated to the service of Jehovah.

Circumcision was a temporary ordinance, and was abolished with the other institutions of Moses. Although a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, it was adapted only to a particular dispensation of it, and therefore ceased when another economy was introduced. The council of Jerusalem, after a solemn discussion of the question, pronounced that it ought not to be enjoined upon the converted Gentiles.§ It was not, at the same time, forbidden to the Jews; but it ought to be observed, that it was permitted, and not commanded. For this permission the same reason may be assigned, which accounts for the liberty to practise for a time other rites of the ceremonial law; a concession to the strong prejudices of the Jews in favour of them, which it pleased God to subdue by gradual means. If, however, any converted Jew insisted upon the necessity of circumcision to salvation, the Apostles were no longer tolerant, but condemned the dangerous error in unqualified terms: "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing."¶ Hence you perceive, that there is no contradiction between those passages of Scripture in which circumcision is permitted, and those in which it is condemned; for, in the former, it is considered merely as a rite to which the Jews had been long accustomed, and which they might retain from innocent motives; and, in the latter, it is viewed as usurping the place of the righteousness of Christ, and made by the ignorant the foundation of their hope.

The question, whether circumcision will be retained by the Jews after their conversion to Christianity, is not worthy of attention. Some have been so foolish as to affirm that it will, and to argue in favour of it from Scripture misunderstood. They might have proceeded a step farther, and from the latter part of Ezekiel's prophecies have concluded, as I believe some wrong-headed persons have done, that the temple of Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and the ancient system of worship will be restored.

The passover is usually accounted the other seal of the covenant, under the former dispensation. It must be acknowledged, that we have not the same evidence that it stood in this relation to the covenant which we have with regard to circumcision; and it is rather by inference that this rank is assigned to it, than by positive explicit institution. It is said, indeed, to have been to the Israelites "for a sign upon their hands, and for a memorial between their eyes;"* but this seems to be a proverbial expression, importing that it was designed to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt. It was, in the first place, a commemorative ordinance; and, in the second place, it was typical of our redemption from a worse bondage than that under which the Israelites groaned. For this view of it, we have the authority of an Apostle, when he says, that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."†

The reasons for which it may be considered as a sign or seal of the covenant, are the following. It is acknowledged that it was an eminent type of Christ. Now, as the Israelites were commanded to make a feast of the paschal lamb, their eating it may be considered as an external representation of the communion of believers in the benefits of his death; and thus it will appear to correspond with the Eucharist, which is confessedly a sacrament. Again, the sprinkling of the blood upon the door-posts and lintels of their houses, is called a sign in the following words: "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."‡ Although God said, that when he saw the blood, he would pass by their houses, it is not to be supposed that this mark was necessary to enable him to distinguish them from the houses of the Egyptians; and the meaning obviously is, that it would be an assurance to them that they should be safe amidst the general destruction. The passover, therefore, served the same purpose with all other seals or sacraments; namely, to attest the promise of God, to give the Israelites a visible pledge that the promise would be performed. The last argument for the sacramental nature of the passover, is the substitution of the Lord's Supper in its room; for immediately after the celebration of the one, our Saviour instituted the other. This circumstance appears to authorize us to look upon both as ordinances of the same kind, and to conclude that the passover was a seal of the old dispensation, as the Eucharist is of the new.

The following is a short account of the passover. On the tenth day of the first month, the Israelites were commanded to take for each family a lamb of the first year, without blemish, and to keep it to the fourteenth day. In the evening of the fourteenth, it was to be killed, and its blood was to be sprinkled upon the two sideposts, and the upper door-post of their houses. The flesh was to be roasted with fire, and wholly eaten with bitter herbs; or if any of it remained till the morning, it was to be burnt with fire. The bread used on that occasion was to be unleavened; and for

* Lev. xxvi. 41. Deut. x. 16. xxx. 6. Jer. iv. 4. Acts vii. 51.
† Col. ii. 11. ‡ Rom. ii. 28, 29. ‖ Rom. ii. 25.
§ Acts xv. ¶ Gal. v. 2.

* Exod. xiii. 9. † 1 Cor. v. 7. ‡ Exod. xii. 13.

seven days, they were not to allow any leaven in their houses. They were farther commanded to eat it with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands; and to eat it in haste, because they were immediately to set out on their journey from Egypt to the promised land. Such was the original institution, from which the subsequent observance differed in some particulars. The passover was first eaten by the Israelites in the ordinary places of their residence, but afterwards in Jerusalem; the blood was not sprinkled upon their houses, but upon the altar; and, instead of being in the dress and posture of persons who were about to set out upon a journey, they celebrated this feast in their ordinary habits, and reclining at their ease. This is evident from the account of the celebration of the passover by our Saviour and his disciples.

That this ordinance was significant, like all other seals, partly appears from what has been already said, and may be more fully shown by the following particulars.—First, The animal which was to be used on this occasion was a lamb; by which our Saviour was prefigured, who was called by John the Baptist, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* There may be an allusion to other sacrificial lambs, and particularly to those which were daily offered in the evening and the morning; but we cannot doubt that there is a reference also to the paschal lamb, since we know from the highest authority, that it was typical of Christ. Not to dwell upon the resemblance of temper between the type and the Antitype, which is commonly mentioned, and is spoken of by the prophet, when he says, "he is led as a lamb to the slaughter,"† but which, I believe, was not in the contemplation of the Baptist, who, in the words quoted above, referred to his substitution and vicarious sufferings; there is a circumstance worthy of particular attention, that the lamb of the passover was without blemish, free from any disease or defect. In this respect, it was a figure of Jesus Christ, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners. As his human nature, when born of the virgin, was a holy thing, so his whole life was distinguished by the exact performance of his duty; and he would challenge the most sharp-sighted of his enemies to discover a single flaw in his conduct: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"‡ Only a pure and spotless oblation could be acceptable to God, and available to expiate the offences of others.

Secondly, The paschal lamb was slain, and thus prefigured our Redeemer, who "poured out his soul unto death." He is called not simply a Lamb, but "a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;"‖ because his death had been adumbrated from the earliest ages by the sacrifice of lambs. Why were altars erected, and priests consecrated, and the bodies of animals consumed with fire? Had God any pleasure in such services, considered in themselves? Was his eye delighted with the sight of blood? or, Were his nostrils gratified with the smell of burning carcases? Notions so gross must be left to the heathens, who supposed that their gods were corporeal beings, and had senses like those of men. The design of all the oblations of the flock and the herd, was to teach the important truth, that Divine justice could not be appeased, and punishment averted from the guilty, but by the effusion of blood. The paschal lamb was a type; and it was slain to prefigure the death of the Messiah, as the only mean of delivering mankind from a greater evil than the bondage of Egypt.

Thirdly, The blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled on the door-posts and lintels of the houses of the Israelites, and represented the application of the great atonement to be afterwards made, to the consciences of men. The ultimate design of this rite was symbolically to teach an important truth, which is clearly revealed in the Gospel, that the blood of Christ, although shed as a sacrifice for sin, will not avail unless it be applied. Had the blood of the paschal lamb been permitted to flow upon the ground, it would not have preserved the Israelites from the destroying angel; his safety depended upon his using it according to the commandment. There were various aspersions of blood under the former dispensation; but there is no reason to doubt that the Apostle refers to that at the passover, as well as to others, when he calls the blood of Christ, "the blood of sprinkling." "Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."* We may apply what was spoken at the institution of the passover, to the subject of the salvation of sinners. As God promised that he would pass by every house on which he should see the blood of the paschal lamb, so he now averts his wrath from every sinner upon whom he sees the blood of Christ; that is, every man who appropriates the atonement to himself by faith, is secure from the effects of his avenging justice. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Having given you a short account of the sacraments of the Jewish Church, I proceed to observe, that they have been superseded by the Christian sacraments. This is plain with respect to the passover; for we have already seen, that immediately after the celebration of it, the Lord's supper was instituted; and an intimation was thus given, that the latter was henceforth to supply the place of the former. Besides, the Apostle Paul obviously refers to the change, when he describes the new ordinance by terms borrowed from the old: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."† So far as the passover was commemorative of the redemption from Egypt, there was no reason why it should be continued when the church ceased to be national, and was to comprehend the Gentiles as well as the Jews; and, so far as it was typical, it was laid aside as useless when that which it prefigured was accomplished. That baptism has come in the room of circumcision, may be inferred from two considerations; that, like circumcision, it signifies our purification from sin; and, that it is the ordinance by which we are admitted into the communion of the visible church. As Paul connects the passover and the Lord's supper, so he connects circumcision and baptism; leading us to conclude, that there is a change or substitution in the one case as well as in the other. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism."‡ It is evident from these words, that baptism is "the circumcision of Christ;" that is, it is the ordinance which he has given to the church instead of circumcision, and which, when rendered effectual by his Spirit, is accompanied with the internal purification, of which circumcision was a sign. As God said to Abraham, "Every man-child among you shall be circumcised;" so Christ said to his Apostles, "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them."

I should now proceed to speak of the Christian sacraments in the order of their institution; but before entering upon the consideration of them, it will be proper to give you a short account of the spurious sacraments of the Church of Rome. While we acknowledge only two, that church maintains that there are seven; hav-

* John i. 29. † Is. liii. 7. ‡ John viii. 46. ‖ Rev. xiii. 8.

* Heb. xii. 24. † 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. ‡ Col. ii. 11, 12.

ing added to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the five following: confirmation, penance or penitence, orders, marriage, and extreme unction.

The first is confirmation. In the primitive church, the imposition of hands was practised as a religious rite, and it is mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ.* It was used in setting persons apart to a sacred office, in working miracles, and in communicating supernatural gifts. After the Samaritans were converted and baptized by Philip the Evangelist, Peter and John, who had been sent to them by the other Apostles, laid their hands upon them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.† The rite continued to be observed after the days of the Apostles, not only in ordaining the ministers of religion, but in the case of the baptized; and it was supposed that, by the imposition of hands, the influences of the Spirit were communicated to them. It was performed, however, immediately after baptism, and not as at present in those churches which keep up the practice, after an interval of several years, when young persons, having been previously examined, are presented to the bishop. Upon this ancient ceremony is founded the pretended sacrament of confirmation; and in order to render it complete, the Church of Rome has made certain additions to the primitive mode. Two things are acknowledged to be necessary to constitute a sacrament: matter, and a form. In order to find matter, which was wanting in the simple imposition of hands, they have invented a chrism or ointment, composed of olive oil and balm,—the former signifying clearness of conscience, and the latter the savour of a good reputation; and it is blessed by the bishop, who alone has power to perform this ceremony. The form of the sacrament consists in the application of this chrism to the forehead of the person, while at the same time these words are pronounced, "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." I need not say that not a vestige of this mummery is to be found in the New Testament. Confirmation is retained in the Church of England, but it is divested of these superstitious additions, and is not considered as a sacrament. At a certain period children who have learned the catechism, appear before the bishop, and renew their baptismal engagements; when the bishop prays, that God, who has regenerated them by water and the Holy Ghost, and given unto them the forgiveness of all their sins, would strengthen them, and increase in them the manifold gifts of his grace. He then lays his hands upon them, and offers up another prayer to the same effect. It may be justly objected, that the ceremony itself is superstitious, being entirely of human institution; that the qualifications are superficial, as any person may see by perusing the trifling catechism which the young people are required to learn; that it proceeds upon the supposition that they are all already the children of God; that while it assumes what in many cases is false, it is calculated to foster an ill-founded persuasion of the favour of God; and that, having been so grossly abused in the Church of Rome, it should have been entirely laid aside by a Protestant Church, as it has manifestly no claim to an apostolical origin. Unhappily, the Church of England thinks herself adorned, when she wears some of the rags of popery.

The second spurious sacrament, is penance or penitence. In the New Testament, Christians are commanded to "confess their faults one to another;"‡ but not a word is said about confession to a priest. In the early ages of the church, a public confession of their sins was required from those who were guilty of great offences, particularly of apostasy; and this was a necessary step to their restoration to the fellowship of the church, from which they had been excluded. This practice being found inconvenient, private confession was introduced; and penitents were required to come to the bishop, or to a priest appointed for the purpose. It would be tedious to trace all the changes which took place in this part of ecclesiastical discipline; and to show how the penance enjoined upon offenders was made private, as well as their confessions; how instead of penance prayers were substituted, so many prayers for example, instead of so many days of fasting; and how the rich were permitted to purchase an exemption, by giving alms to the poor and the church. It is sufficient to observe, that in the Church of Rome auricular confession is established; that is, every member of that church is required to make confession to a priest at least once a year. In doing so, he is bound to act candidly and freely, to conceal nothing, but to make known to the confessor all the sins which he has committed since he last appeared before him, and even the secret thoughts of his heart. It is easy to see that this institution invests the clergy with an uncontrolled power over the laity; for nothing gives one man a firmer hold of another, than his knowledge of such parts of the conduct of the other as he should most anxiously wish to conceal. There is a security, indeed, provided in the secrecy which is enjoined upon confessors, who are forbidden under the severest penalty to reveal any thing which has been disclosed to them; but still the reflection that the penitent has deposited in the bosom of the priest matters upon which his honour, and perhaps his life, depends, must retain him in a state of absolute subjection to him. It is the business of the priest to ascertain whether the person is penitent; and here a distinction is made between contrition, or sorrow for sin arising from the love of God, and attrition, arising from an inferior cause, as the loss which he has sustained, the shame which he has incurred, or the danger to which he has exposed himself.* To a man who takes the Scripture as his guide, it would seem that the latter was not repentance at all; but in the Church of Rome, either the one or the other is sufficient. There remains the satisfaction or penance enjoined upon the penitent, which consists in fasting, but rendered as easy as possible; in repeating a number of prayers, which it seems Papists consider as a punishment; or in some other thing which may be performed without a single sentiment or feeling of piety. The sacrament of penitence consists, like every other sacrament, of two parts, the matter and the form. The matter is the confession of the penitent to the priest, his contrition, and his satisfaction. The form is in these words pronounced by the priest, "I absolve thee." &c.† You will observe to what a wretched shift Papists are driven to make out a sacrament. There is no visible sign in this sacrament, but words and feelings of the mind; and the performance of certain acts is, with palpable absurdity, converted into the matter of it. Prayer might be made the matter of a sacrament with equal propriety. The form is impious and blasphemous; and when a worthless priest presumes to give absolution, we may indignantly say, "Who can forgive sins but God?" The whole is comparatively a modern invention, and is no more entitled to be accounted an ordinance of Christ, than the feat of a mountebank, or the trick of a juggler.

The third sacrament is called the sacrament of orders, because it relates to the consecration of the different orders of office-bearers in the church. Of those in the Roman hierarchy there are seven,—porters or doorkeepers, readers, exorcists, acolytes, sub-deacons, deacons, and priests. To these some add an eighth, the order of bishops; but others consider it not as a dis-

* Heb. vi. 2. † Acts viii. 17. ‡ James v. 16.

* Concil. Trident. Sessio xiv. *De Penitentia*, cap. iv.
† Ibid. cap. iii.

tinct order, but as a higher degree of the priesthood. As Jesus Christ has appointed certain persons to perform the public offices of religion, so there is a prescribed form of setting them apart, which we learn from the practice of the Apostles. They ordained ministers and deacons by prayer, and the imposition of hands. This was the simple form used by them, and it continued for a long time to be observed without any superstitious addition. If, in the first age, the imposition of hands was accompanied with the communication of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, it simply denoted, after miracles had ceased, the designation of the person; and prayer was offered up for the divine blessing upon him and his labours. In this manner he was devoted to God, and received authority to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, or to care for the poor and take part in the government of the church, according to the nature of the office with which he was invested. In process of time, when men began to corrupt the ordinances of the gospel, under the pretext of adorning them and rendering them more august, various ceremonies were introduced, by which the original simplicity of the form was destroyed. In the Church of Rome, the plan was adopted of delivering to a priest the sacred vessels,—the paten and the chalice, or the plate and the cup,—and accompanying this action with certain words empowering him to celebrate mass, and offer sacrifice to God; and thus they have contrived what they deem the essential parts of a sacrament. In the ordination of a priest, the *matter* is the vessels which are delivered to him, and the *form* is the pronouncing of these words, "Take thou authority to offer up sacrifices to God, and to celebrate masses both for the dead and for the living, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." You will observe that this sacrament is wholly a human invention; men have contrived both the matter and the form, for of neither is there the slightest vestige in the New Testament. It rests entirely upon the decrees of popes and popish councils, who have no more power to appoint new means of grace, and new seals of the covenant, than the first person whom we shall meet in the streets. There is nothing which bears any resemblance to a sacrament in the apostolical form of ordination. Prayer is a simple act of religious worship; and the imposition of hands is no more a sacramental action in this case, than it was in the performance of miracles, when it was occasionally, but not uniformly used.

The fourth spurious sacrament is marriage. It may excite surprise that any person, possessed of common sense, should have ever thought of giving this name and office to a civil contract; for in this light it may surely be considered, although it was instituted by God himself. Civil government is also his institution, but we do not therefore look upon it as a religious ordinance. The celebration of marriage in this country, by the ministers of religion, does not alter its nature. This is an accidental circumstance, not at all necessary to its validity; and the union would be as firm and as holy, if the law, to which it belongs to regulate the form, should appoint marriage to be celebrated by the magistrate. You may also be curious to know how Papists have contrived to make a sacrament out of marriage, as it does not really occur to us that it furnishes the essential parts. This business has caused no little perplexity to them; but they have finally rested in this determination, that the matter of the sacrament is the consent of the parties, and the form, the words or sign by which their consent is expressed. Here, then, is a sacrament, in which something that cannot be seen or felt or heard, is the matter, namely, the inward consent of the mind; and consequently an external sign, which is indispensable to every sacrament, is wanting. With respect to the form, it consists in words, as in the other sacraments; but, whereas in those they are pronounced by the priest, in this they are pronounced by the parties. Marriage is therefore an anomalous sacrament, for it is made and celebrated exclusively by the persons who receive it. It is impossible to conceive a more complete mass of absurdity. That cannot be a sacrament which is not even an ordinance of religion, and is not peculiar to the members of the church. It was originally instituted for the human race in general, and all men have an equal right to it. The marriages of Jews, and Heathens, and Mahometans, are as valid as those of Christians. Papists plead that the Scripture calls marriage a sacrament, for, where Paul, speaking of it, says, "This is a great mystery,"* the Vulgate reads, "This is a great sacrament." But I have accounted for this translation, by showing you, that anciently *sacramentum* was used as equivalent to μυστηριον. It is evident that nothing more can be inferred from the passage, than that marriage is an emblem of the union between our Saviour and his followers; and perhaps not even so much is intended, for the Apostle seems to confine his words to this union alone, and to put us on our guard against thinking that he is speaking of marriage, when he immediately adds, "But I speak of Christ and the church." The mystery is the mystical union.

The last spurious sacrament of the Church of Rome is extreme unction. It is called unction, because the person who receives this sacrament is anointed with oil; and extreme unction, because it is administered *in articulo mortis*, when he is understood to be at the point of death. The matter is olive oil, which has been blessed by a bishop; and the form consists in the application of this oil to the five senses, with these words: "By this sacred unction, and his most tender mercy, may God pardon every sin which thou hast committed, by seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching."† The oil is put upon the different parts of the body, as the name of each is enunciated. The person is understood to receive the remission of his sins, and to be prepared to enter into heaven, after having undergone a complete purification in purgatory. If extreme unction were, indeed, an institution of Christ, it would be invaluable as a sure passport to immortality; but if it be a human device, what can we say, but that, to those who depend upon it, it must prove a passport to the place of darkness and sorrow? For this sacrament, as well as for marriage, Papists plead Scripture, but with equal want of success. The passage to which they appeal, is in the Epistle of James: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church: and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick."‡ Those who imagine that these words favour the sacrament of extreme unction, allow themselves to be carried away by a sound without any regard to the sense. It is obvious that the two things are totally different. The anointing of James was miraculous, or a sign accompanying a miracle, which, from the following words concerning the twelve disciples when they were sent forth by our Lord, seems to have been frequently used in the apostolic age: "And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them."‖ But, although the Church of Rome still claims the power of working miracles, we know that the pretension is absolutely false; and besides, it is not alleged that there is any miracle in the present case. The design of anointing a sick person in the days of the Apostles, was to restore him to health; the design of the popish anointing, is to prepare him

* Ephes. v. 32.
† Concil. Trident. Sessio xiv. *de Extrema Unctione*, cap. 1.
‡ James v. 14. ‖ Mark vi. 13.

for death. The one, when accompanied with faith, saved the sick; but the other is not administered till all hope of recovery is gone. It is certain that, although oil was used after the days of the Apostles on various occasions, and was, in particular, applied to the sick, it was not till a late period that the sacrament of extreme unction was devised by the Schoolmen, and the Council of Trent established it by law: "If any man shall say that extreme unction, is not truly and properly a sacrament, instituted by Christ our Lord, and promulgated by the blessed Apostle James, but is only a rite received from the Fathers, or a human figment; let him be accursed."*

Regardless of the fulminations of the antichristian church, we reject all these sacraments as the devices of impious men; and adhering to the word of God as the sole rule of our faith and practice, we receive only the two sacraments which our Lord and Saviour has instituted, Baptism and the Holy Supper.

LECTURE LXXXVIII.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

Baptism, the Rite of Admission into the Church.—Difference between the Baptisms of John and Christ.—Application of Water Necessary.—Certain Popish additions to the Rite.—Mode of Applying the Symbol.—Immersion not Necessary.—Who may be Baptized.—Baptism of Infants Vindicated.

I now proceed to consider the two sacraments of the Christian Church, which alone are worthy of attention and have a claim to be observed with devout reverence, because they alone are of Divine institution. I begin with Baptism, by which we are initiated into the fellowship of the Church, and which, in the order of dispensation, precedes the Lord's Supper; none having a right to the holy table but those who have been previously purified by the washing of water and by the word.

It has pleased God, under both dispensations, to institute an external sign of admission into the church, and of the participation of the blessings of the covenant. From the days of Abraham to the coming of Christ, the sign was circumcision; but as it implied an obligation to obey the law of Moses, which is now repealed, it is laid aside, and baptism is substituted in its room. After his resurrection, Jesus gave the following commission to his disciples: "Go ye therefore, and teach" or *make disciples of* "*all nations* —μαθητευσατε παντα τα εθνη—baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."† Baptism had been previously administered to those who acknowledged him as the Messiah, and desired to be admitted into the number of his followers; not, however, by himself, but by his disciples, as we learn from this passage in John: "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee."‡ We cannot, therefore, consider the ordinance as new, when he gave a commission to the Apostles prior to his ascension; but it then received a more extensive application, as they were authorized to administer it to men of every nation. Baptism was administered also by John his forerunner; and that which is now practised is commonly accounted a continuation of it. But although they resemble each other in the external sign, and the mode of applying it, there are some respects in which they materially differ. "John baptized his disciples into the faith of the Messiah as to come; we are baptized into the faith of him as actually come. The baptism of John was evidently designed to serve a temporary purpose, in common with all the other parts of his ministry; the baptism of Christ is to continue to the end of the world. The one did not properly belong to the Christian dispensation, but was preparatory to it; the other is an ordinance given by our Saviour to his church, to supply the place of circumcision. Christian baptism is administered in the name of the persons of the Trinity; whereas we have no evidence that the Divine Persons were explicitly recognized in the baptism of John. From these considerations, it appears that the two ordinances differ so much in their form, in their design, and in their relation to the present dispensation, that they may be regarded as perfectly distinct, and consequently, that a person who had been baptized by John might have been baptized again by an Apostle."* If this reasoning is just, we are at no loss to understand a passage in the Acts, which has caused no small perplexity to commentators, and about which they have been much divided in sentiment. Speaking of some men who had received only the baptism of John, it says, that when they were more fully instructed by Paul, "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."† It seems unquestionable that they were rebaptized, and the reason was, that the baptism of John, and that of Christ, were different ordinances.

It is an opinion adopted by not a few, that our Lord borrowed this rite from the Jews, among whom it was customary to baptize proselytes, whether male or female, by immersing the whole body in water. Men view subjects in different lights, according to their habits of thinking; but I confess, that to me it seems highly improbable that he would adopt one of the most solemn ordinances of his religion from the corrupt church of Judea, and found it upon a practice manifestly superstitious, which they had added without authority to the commandment of God. It is altogether incredible that, while he condemned their vain traditions and observances, he would embody one of these in his own institute, and thus counteract the effect of his reproofs. No mention is made of the baptism of proselytes in the works of Philo and Josephus, and the first notice of it is found in the Mishna and Gemara; of which the one was composed at the earliest date in the second century, although learned men in general bring it much farther down, and the latter is so late as the seventh. There is no evidence that the practice existed in the time of our Saviour, and it is much more likely that, among the Jews, it was an acknowledged imitation of his institution, than that he was indebted for it to them.

Baptism is performed by the application of water to the body. This is a point which it may be judged altogether superfluous to prove, because it seems to admit of no dispute; but there have been found fools and perverse controvertists to call in question the plainest facts. Some have maintained that Christ did not enjoin the baptism of water, but of doctrine; and argue that, as Christianity is a spiritual religion, all external rites are excluded from it. It is quite sufficient to answer, that the Apostles did actually baptize with water. But it has been alleged by some who could not deny this fact, that the baptism of water was only a temporary institution, and that it is superseded by the baptism of the Spirit. Let them prove their allegation, for this burden lies upon them. It

* Sessio xiv. *de Extrema Unctione*, can. i.
† Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. ‡ John iv. 1—3.

* Dick's Lectures on the Acts, p. 406. 2d Edit.
† Acts xix. 5.

happens unfortunately for their hypothesis, that the baptism of water was used after the dispensation of the spirit had commenced, and in an age when the influences of the Holy Ghost were most abundantly communicated; and it is a complete refutation of it, that, when our Lord instituted this rite, he promised to be with his disciples in executing his order, not only to the end of that age, but to the end of the Christian dispensation, or "of the world," as we have translated the word.

In the Church of Rome, baptism is celebrated with several other rites besides the application of water. Not only is the sign of the cross made, and the person exorcised to drive out evil spirits, but salt is put into his mouth, to signify that by grace he is freed from the corruption of sin; spittle is applied to his nostrils and ears, to intimate that the Holy Spirit gives light to the mind to perceive the heavenly truth; he is anointed with oil on the crown of his head, that he may understand that he is henceforth joined to Christ as a member of his body, and is called a Christian from Christ the anointed one: if he be an adult, he is clothed with a white garment, or if a child, a white handkerchief is given to him, to represent the glory of the resurrection of which he is an heir, the beauty with which his soul now purified from sin is adorned, and the innocence which he should study to maintain during his whole life. Lastly, a burning wax candle is put into his hand, to show that faith, being inflamed with charity which he received in baptism, is to be nourished and increased by the study of good works. It is well that Papists have explained the various parts of this exhibition, which would have otherwise puzzled every human understanding. Some of these rites were introduced at an early period; but they are all human inventions, which disfigure the simple ordinance of Christ, and have been rejected by our Church in its just zeal for the purity of his institution.

The manner in which water should be applied to the body, whether by affusion or aspersion, or by immersion, is a question which has divided Christians into different parties, and has been discussed with great vehemence of contention. An attempt has been made to decide the controversy by an appeal to the meaning of the original terms. Βαπτιζω, it is commonly said, signifies to *immerse*, or *plunge into water*, and consequently βαπτισμα and βαπτισμος, are properly translated *immersion*. Βαπτιζω is derived from βαπτω, which has the same signification, and is used to express the action of dipping and dyeing. Examples, however, have been produced from which it appears, that the idea sometimes conveyed even by this verb, which it is commonly admitted signifies *to dip*, is that of sprinkling, rather than of dipping. In the Revelation our Saviour is described as clothed with a garment—βεβαμμενον αιματι—*dipped in blood*,* says our translation, but rather *sprinkled* or *stained*; for he is represented as a warrior and a conqueror, and the garments of such a person after a battle are not dipped in blood, but stained or sprinkled with the blood of his enemies, which has spouted from their wounds. This is the image presented to us in the parallel passage of Isaiah, where in the same character he says, "Their blood shall be sprinkled on my garments, and I will stain all my raiment."† The sentence pronounced upon Nebuchadnezzar was, that his body should be "wet with the dew of heaven;"‡ and it is thus translated in the Greek version, Απο της δροσου του ουρανου το σωμα αυτου εβαφη.‖ Here the word signifies *to sprinkle*, or *moisten by sprinkling*, for his body was not wetted by being dipped in dew, but by its falling upon him.

I do not intend to deny that βαπτω ever means *to dip*, but that this is its only sense; and hence we may fairly conclude, that although its derivative βαπτ.ζω also means *to immerse*, it does not follow that this is its only signification. Two examples have been quoted from the Apocryphal writings, in one of which it denotes *washing* without specifying the form, and in the other it seems to be synonymous with *sprinkling*. Judith is said to have *washed herself* in the camp, or by the camp *at a fountain of water*, εβαπτιζετο επι της πηγης του υδατος.* The place, a *fountain* or *spring*, naturally excludes the idea of immersion, and the phrase is επι της πηγης, *at the fountain*, not εν τη πηγη, as it would have been if she had bathed in it. The son of Sirach, speaking of a person who has been purified from the pollution contracted by touching a dead body, calls him βαπτιζομενος απο νεκρου.† But when we consult the law of Moses to which he refers, we find that he was purified by aspersion. That his uncleanness might be removed, the water of separation was sprinkled upon him, as you will see in the nineteenth chapter of Numbers.‡ If then the word was so understood by Jewish writers in Greek, we may presume that it retains the same in the New Testament, or that this meaning may be assigned to it when circumstances do not forbid; and that it is unwarrantable to affirm, from the simple use of the term in reference to this ordinance of Christ, that we are bound to administer it only by immersion. "The Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash," or baptize themselves, "they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing" or baptisms "of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables."‖ The washing of the hands was performed among the Jews by pouring water upon them, as appears from the express testimony of Scripture: "Elisha the son of Shaphat poured water on the hands of Elijah."§ The "baptizing" after their return from market, probably signifies the same thing with washing their hands, as it is very improbable that on every such occasion they washed the whole body; and at any rate, if they put themselves to this trouble, the body would be washed in the same manner with the hands, by pouring water upon it. There is no reason to think that this baptism consisted in immersion. Cups and pots and brazen vessels may have been "baptized" by being plunged into water; but as the operation could have been performed equally well by pouring water into them, and upon them, we can draw no certain conclusion respecting the mode, and the words βαπτιζων and βαπτισμος, convey nothing more than the general idea of washing. The last word in this passage, κλινων, is improperly rendered *tables* in our version, and the proper translation is *beds* or *couches*. These were the couches on which they reclined at their meals. They were so large as to hold several persons at the same time; and from their size it seems reasonable to suppose that they were "baptized," not by being immersed in water, but by being washed with the hand or sprinkled, to remove any real or fancied impurity.

Hitherto we have found nothing to justify the confidence with which it has been asserted, that βαπτιζω necessarily signifies *to immerse*. But to supply what may be wanting in the evidence arising from the word itself, it is alleged that such phrases are joined with it, as clearly show that it was by dipping or plunging that baptism was originally administered. For exam-

* Rev. xix. 13. † Is. lxiii. 33. ‡ Dan. iv. 23.
‖ His body shall be (*ebaphe*) moistened with the dew of heaven.

* Judith xii. 7.
† Ecclus. xxxiv. 25. Purified from (the touch of) the dead.
‡ Num. xix. 13. ‖ Mark vii. 3, 4. § 2 Kings iii. 11

ple, John is said to have baptized *in Jordan**—εν τω Ιορδανη—standing, no doubt, in the water, and successively dipping his disciples. That the preposition εν often denotes *the place in which* any thing is done, cannot be denied; but among its many senses, it signifies also *at*, or *nigh to*. "Now, *in the place*—εν τω τοπω—where he was crucified, there was a garden,"† not in the *identical spot*, but *in its immediate vicinity*. In like manner—ὁ πυργος εν τω Σιλωαμ—is "the tower," not "*in* the pool of Siloam,"‡ but *close by it*. It has been remarked, that while Matthew says that John baptized "in Jordan," the Evangelist John tells us that he was baptizing "beyond Jordan;"‖ and as we cannot suppose a contradiction between their statements, we must reconcile them by understanding Matthew to mean *close by Jordan*, and the other Evangelist, that the place was on the opposite bank of the river. Besides, although John had actually taken his station in the river, it does not follow that he immersed his disciples, because he might have chosen it for convenience, as the number to be baptized was great, that there might be a sufficient supply of water at hand to pour upon their heads or faces.

The use of the preposition εις and εκ or εξ, in reference to baptism, is supposed to furnish an argument equally conclusive in favour of immersion. It is related in the history of the Ethiopian eunuch, that he and Philip "went down both *into* the water—εις το υδωρ—and he baptized him. And when they came up *out of* the water—εκ του υδατος—the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip."§ Here it is said is an instance of baptism by immersion, as it could only be for that purpose that the Evangelist and his convert went into the water. It is certain that εις does sometimes signify *into*, and εκ *out of*; but it is equally certain that at other times the proper translation of the one is *to*, and of the other is *from*. When Jesus came—εις το μνημειον—*to the sepulchre* of Lazarus,¶ we know that he did not enter into it; and when ships came *from* Tiberias,**—εκ Τιβεριαδος,—we do not suppose that they sailed out of the midst of the city, but that that was the place from which their voyage commenced. The preposition εκ simply signifies *the point from which*, and εις, *the point to which* a movement is made. In the present case nothing more is intimated by the sacred historian, than that Philip and the eunuch went to the place where they saw water, and that after baptism they both left it. A different preposition is used in the narrative of our Saviour's baptism, and our translators have improperly rendered ανεβη απο του υδατος, "he went up straightway *out of* the water,"†† because the true sense of απο is *from*, not *out of*, and it marks the place from which he went up, without at all suggesting the idea that he had been *in* the water.

There is an expression on which the Baptists lay much stress as favouring their practice of immersion, which occurs in two passages. In both we are said to be "buried with Christ in baptism;" and hence it is inferred that we ought to be baptized by immersion, which only is emblematical of a burial. You will find the one passage in the sixth chapter of the Romans, and the other in the second chapter of the Colossians.‡‡ There is an appearance of childishness in thus explaining the expression, which is manifestly figurative. In the Epistle to the Romans the Apostle first says, that we are baptized into the death of Christ, and then adds, that we are buried with him in baptism;" referring not to the form, but to the import of the ordinance, by which it is signified, that through his death we become dead to sin, or are delivered from its power. In the very next verse he expresses the same idea by another figure, when he says, that "we have been planted together in the likeness of his death." How comes it to be supposed that the one figure refers to the mode of baptism rather than the other? Why should it resemble burying more than planting? What reason can be assigned for laying hold of the one expression in preference to the other, but the desire to support a hypothesis? Would it not have been more suitable to the character of honest and intelligent interpreters of Scripture, to conclude that as there is a mixture of figures, the Apostle did not allude to any external rite, and merely intended by both to signify that baptism is a sign of our fellowship with Christ in his death? Besides, Baptists proceed upon an erroneous idea of our Saviour's burial, into which it is strange that any person should have fallen, who had read the New Testament with any degree of attention. They seem to think that he was buried after the manner of our country, where a dead body may be said to be immersed in the earth, because it is let down into a grave and covered with mould. Had his body been interred, we might have fancied a resemblance between its burial and plunging of the baptized into water. But nothing is more remote from the truth. The sepulchre of Christ was an apartment hewn out of a rock, the floor of which was on a level with the ground, or depressed only a little below the surface, and which was so capacious that a person could sit and stand upright in it. Here his body was deposited, and was covered only with the grave-clothes. Let Baptists now point out the resemblance between the plunging of the baptized into water, and the burial of Christ. No two things in the world are more unlike, and this silly argument vanishes into smoke.

We have seen that nothing certain can be learned from the original term βαπτιζω, because it has different meanings, signifying sometimes *to immerse*, and sometimes *to wash*. When a word is used to denote an action which is figurative, it seems a fair way of determining its sense, to observe how the thing which the action represents is in other places expressed. As the water in baptism is emblematical of the influences of the Spirit, we may bring to the illustration of the term *to baptize*, the passages of Scripture which speak of the communication of those influences; and there is not one of them which alludes to immersion. The Holy Ghost is said "to fall" upon men, to be "poured out" upon them; and in reference to the same subject, God promises "to sprinkle clean water upon us," "to be as the dew unto Israel,"* and that his grace shall "come down as rain upon the mown grass, and as showers which water the earth."† If water is a significant emblem of the Spirit, because it purifies, is it not reasonable to suppose that a resemblance was intended between the application of the water and the manner in which the communication of the Spirit is described? It is by no means probable that God should speak of his own operations in one way, and symbolically represent them in a different way; that he should promise to sprinkle or pour out his Spirit upon us, and to confirm this promise would command us to be plunged into water. There would be no analogy in this case between the promise and the seal; and the discrepance would give rise to a confusion of ideas. This I conceive to be an argument of considerable force in favour of our mode of administering baptism, and an objection against immersion which cannot be easily evaded.

I may add, that there is little probability that the

* Matth. iii. 6. † John. xix. 41. ‡ Luke xiii. 4.
‖ John i. 23. § Acts viii. 38, 39. ¶ John ix. 38.
** Ib. vi. 23. †† Matth. iii. 16. Mark i. 10.
‡‡ Rom. vi. 4. Col. ii. 12.

* Acts. x. 44. Zech. xii. 10. Ezek. xxxvi, 25. Hos. xiv. 5.
† Ps. lxxii. 6.

baptisms recorded in the New Testament were performed by immersion. We have already considered the case of John, and shown that he did not baptize in Jordan itself, but on its banks. It is not very credible, that the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost were dipped. There was a pool in Jerusalem, called the pool of Siloam; but we do not know whether from its size and situation it could have been fit for the purpose. Besides the gross indecency of it, it would have been a tedious process, if all this multitude had put off and put on their clothes in public; and it is very unlikely that they were plunged with their garments upon them. When whole families were baptized in their own houses, there is no reason to think that, on every occasion, a sufficient quantity of water could be found for immersion. We are certain, that in very few of our houses the baptism of immersion could be practised; and the houses of the Jews and Greeks, we presume, were not better accommodated. Some men seem to believe that, in the Apostolic age, every house had a font or bath; but why they believe this no man can tell, except that it suits their hypothesis. The Apostles could not administer baptism by immersion in every place; so that if this had been the mode, when they had made converts they must have often been under the necessity of leading them away to a pond or river, and, in many regions of the east, must sometimes have made long journeys in order to find one. But there is not a single fact in the New Testament which gives countenance to this idea. The narrative implies that they baptized converts on the spot, and, consequently, that only a small quantity of water was necessary, which could be always procured.

The argument for immersion fails, upon a careful examination. It is founded upon the assumption that βαπτιζω has only one meaning, while it has more; upon a mistake of the import of two prepositions, εις and εκ; and upon a fanciful analogy; it is contrary to the usual language of Scripture respecting the thing signified by baptism, and to the general strain of the history, which relates instances of baptism when immersion could not be practised. With whatever confidence this has been pronounced to be the only scriptural mode, the evidence preponderates on the opposite side. We may therefore persevere in our own practice, and assure ourselves that they are lawfully baptized upon whom water has been only sprinkled or poured.

There is a point of still greater importance than the mode of baptism, about which Christians are divided in sentiment. A controversy has arisen with respect to the persons to whom it should be administered; those who are called Pædobaptists maintaining that, in certain circumstances, children have a right to the ordinance, while Antipædobaptists confine it to adults.

There is but one opinion with regard to grown up persons not baptized in infancy, who profess faith in Christ and a desire to be received into the communion of the Church. In this case the command is explicit; and it is because they are so distinctly mentioned, while nothing is said concerning infants, that baptism has been supposed to belong exclusively to the former. "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."* The qualification in the sight of God, who searches the heart, is faith unfeigned; and in the sight of men, who can judge only by moral evidence, is a credible profession of it, or such a profession as appears to them to be sincere. Accordingly, the Apostles acted upon this principle, as we learn from the history of their proceedings. I select the instance of the Ethiopian eunuch. When this man had heard the gospel from the mouth of Philip, he said to him, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."* The Apostles were sent to teach or make disciples of all nations, by instructing them in the religion of Christ; and when those whom they had addressed acquired a competent measure of knowledge, and recognized Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, they were then to baptize them. Baptism is not to be administered to a Jew, a Mahometan, or a heathen, who still adheres to his original creed, nor to a man who may ignorantly express a wish for it. It is a badge of Christianity, which would be absurdly and profanely attached to a person who retained the principles of another religion, or gave a blind assent to a system which he did not understand.

Upon the connexion of faith with baptism, Antipædobaptists found what they consider as an unanswerable argument against the baptism of infants. If it is required that he who is baptized should believe, it follows that children ought not to be baptized, because they are not capable of faith. The argument has a specious appearance, which imposes on superficial thinkers; but when it is thoroughly canvassed, it will be found, I trust, to be destitute of force. When our Lord says, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved," he no doubt teaches that baptism should be administered to a believer; but if we infer that none but a believer should be baptized, let us observe the consequence which will follow from his words. Faith is made as necessary to salvation as to baptism; and it is as fairly deducible from his words that none can be saved, as that none should be baptized but believers. Thus, children are excluded from heaven, as well as from this initiatory rite. This, however, our adversaries will not allow. They admit, as well as we, that many children are saved; and, consequently, admit that what is required from adults in order to their eternal happiness, is not required from infants. If they will be consistent, they must further admit that this text speaks of adults alone; and, consequently, that the argument drawn from it against the baptism of infants is a sophism, more being contained in the conclusion than in the premises. It evidently speaks of adults, for it supposes them to be capable of faith. But because faith is made necessary to their baptism, it is not made necessary to the baptism of infants, any more than it is necessary to the salvation of infants, because it is necessary to the salvation of adults. And with respect to infants, since, according to our antagonists, the thing signified is granted to them, it will not be easy to assign a good reason why the sign should be denied.

Infants were proper subjects of circumcision. Circumcision implied an obligation to observe the ordinances and commandments of God; and hence the circumcised person is pronounced to be "a debtor to do the whole law."† If, under the ancient economy, there had been some persons of similar views to those of Antipædobaptists, they might have brought forward as specious reasonings against the circumcision, as is now produced against the baptism, of children. They might have said, 'Children have not yet attained the use of reason, and are therefore disqualified for coming under a moral obligation. How can they be bound to obey a law which they do not understand? They know not what is going on when circumcision is administered to them; and, with respect to them, it is mere mockery, a rite without a meaning. Let it be reserved for grown up persons, to whom its design can be explained, and who can rationally and voluntarily

* Mark xvi. 15, 16.

* Acts viii. 37. † Gal. v. 3.

accede to the covenant of which it is a seal.' Yet the male children of the Israelites were circumcised on the eighth day after their birth; and why then may not the children of Christians be dedicated at as early a period to the service of God? The objection might have been strengthened by the remark which an Apostle has made, that, in the case of Abraham, in whom circumcision commenced, it was "a seal of the righteousness of faith."* Here it might have been said, faith preceded circumcision. It not only preceded, but was pre-supposed as the indispensable qualification of the person to be circumcised; and as this took place in the case of Abraham, the father of the Jews, it was certainly intended to signify that the rite should not be performed upon any of his posterity, unless they possessed the same qualification. This is exactly the argument of our antagonists against the baptism of children; but we see at once how little it avails. The children of Christian parents may as well be baptized, as the children of Jewish parents were circumcised, without faith.

Had it been the will of God that the religion of Moses should become universal, the persons sent forth to promulgate it would have received a commission similar to that of the Apostles, and would have been commanded, first to teach all nations, and then to circumcise them. If any person had inferred, from the terms of their commission, that none should be circumcised without being previously taught, we know that the conclusion would have been wrong, because there was a previous command to administer this rite to children; and hence we perceive the fallacy of inferring from the Apostolical commission, that believers only should be baptized. It may be said that the two cases are different, because there is an express law for the circumcision of children, but no precept for for their baptism. We answer, that, as there is a precept for circumcising them, and admitting them into the church, it appears that their age is no obstacle to the participation of the seal of the covenant; and that, as this privilege was once conceded to children, we presume that it is continued to them, and demand, not assertion, but proof, that it is revoked. In this case, the *onus probandi* lies upon our antagonists.

It is in vain to tell us that "circumcision was a sign of carnal descent, a mark of national distinction, and a token of interest in those temporal blessings that were promised to Abraham." All this may be true; but it is also true that it was a sign of spiritual blessings, a seal of the righteousness of faith, and was therefore precisely of the same import with christian baptism. The passages of Scripture which speak of "circumcising the foreskin of the heart," of "circumcising the heart to love the Lord," and of the regenerated "as the true circumcision," demonstrate that it was a seal of the covenant of grace; and consequently, that the new seal, which has displaced it but bears the same signification, may, with equal propriety, be administered to infants. It is the interest of Antipædobaptists to show that baptism has not come in the room of circumcision; but, however necessary it may be to their scheme, they cannot proceed in the attempt without setting aside the express declaration of Scripture. Attend to the following words of the Apostle: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God."† The subject of discourse is regeneration, or the putting off of the body of sins; and of this change, it is intimated circumcision was formerly a sign. The blessing is continued under the new dispensation; but is it now without a sign? Is there no representation of it to our senses under the Gospel? Yes, it is still adumbrated by a new ordinance, and we are circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, when we are buried with him in baptism. The mention of baptism in the same sentence with circumcision as equivalent to it, and as significant of the same spiritual change in the state of the soul, cannot fail to suggest to any person, who is not prejudiced, that the one is the substitute of the other. Circumcision has ceased; but there is another initiatory rite given for the same purpose, which ought, therefore, to be administered to the same persons for whom circumcision was designed.

There was no occasion to specify children in the commission given to the Apostles; because they and all the Jews would understand that, since baptism had come in the room of circumcision, their children had the same right to it as themselves. Both having been comprehended in the covenant made with Abraham, they would naturally conclude that the new covenant or dispensation was of equal extent. If a change had been made to the exclusion of infants, it would have excited surprise, and given rise to inquiries, and called forth explanations on the part of the Apostles, to satisfy the new converts, that they might acquiesce in this unexpected limitation of their privileges. We cannot suppose that an alteration so important, and so deeply affecting the interest of their families, would have passed in silence. Yet we do not find a single hint, that the ordinance which had come in the room of circumcision was to be administered to adults alone, and that their children must wait till they were capable of making a profession of faith. The language in which the Jews were addressed on the day of Pentecost, instead of suggesting a repeal of the law, seems rather to import that it was to continue in force: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."* In what other light could the audience understand these words, than that the promise of salvation through Christ was made, not to those alone who believed, but to their seed: that their families were to be admitted to the privileges of the new dispensation as well as themselves; and that baptism was to both a sign and seal of their interest in the covenant. They would naturally and unavoidably judge this to be the meaning of the declaration, especially as it was expressed in the same terms which had been used at the institution of circumcision: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." "This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee: Every man-child among you shall be circumcised."† God made a covenant with Abraham and his seed, and the promise is to believers of every nation, and their children. There is no difference in these two cases; *seed* and *children* have the same signification; and the plain inference is, that the children of Christians are to be baptized, as the children of Jews were circumcised.

Our Lord said on a certain occasion, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."‡ The kingdom of heaven frequently signifies the new dispensation, or the church upon earth; and if this is the meaning here, children are pronounced to belong to it, and have

* Rom. iv. 11. † Col. ii. 11. 12.

* Acts ii. 38, 39. † Gen. xvii. 7, 10. ‡ Matth. xix. 14.

an undoubted right to the sign of admission. If, however, as some contend, it is the state of glory, the inference is still good, that being heirs of eternal life they ought not to be denied the ordinance which is the seal of their title to it. It is more probable, that "the kingdom of heaven" is in this passage the church, and our Lord assigns as the reason why children should be suffered to come to him, that he recognized them as members of it. It is a pitiful evasion to say that τοιουτων, *such*, signifies not children, but *persons of child-like dispositions*. It makes our Lord reason inconclusively; for how could it be a reason that parents should bring their children to him to be blessed, that persons resembling children in humility and teachableness, are members of his church? If this interpretation of the passage did not favour their own hypothesis, Antipædobaptists themselves would exclaim against it as forced and unnatural.

Passing other arguments from Scripture in favour of infant baptism, I shall conclude by calling your attention to the fact, that in the Apostolic age, not only believers themselves were baptized, but their households. Lydia was baptized, "and her household." The jailor of Philippi was baptized, "and all his;"* and Paul baptized "the household of Stephanas."† These are only a sample of the hundreds and thousands of families, to whom this rite was administered upon the faith of their parents. A household comprehends all the individuals living together under the same roof, and subject to the same domestic government; and certainly children are not excluded. This would be an arbitrary and most unwarrantable limitation of the term. When it is used on any other occasion, it always suggests the idea not only of servants but of children, and, in the first place, of the latter; and it would suggest this idea to all the readers of the New Testament, if their minds were free from prejudice, and had nothing in view but to discover the truth. Were we told now that a certain man had been baptized and his family, there is not one of us who would not immediately think of his children, and conclude, that they had all been washed with water in the name of the Trinity. It may be objected to this view, that we have no certainty that there were children in the families mentioned; but this is a miserable subterfuge. What was done in the cases specified, was done in many other instances; for they are recorded as a specimen of the mode of procedure, and it would be truly wonderful, if among all the converts in the primitive times, there was not one who had children; so wonderful indeed that no man in his sober senses could believe it. As the existence of children in families is so common that the exceptions are rare, we are authorized to conclude, that they were often found in the houses of the early disciples; and the argument from the baptism of households is obviously on our side. We have satisfactory evidence that the Apostles baptized infants; and unless they were considered as belonging to the church, and proper subjects of this seal of their admission into it, we can affix no meaning to these words of Paul, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."‡ The holiness of children which they derive from the faith of their parents, can signify nothing but their separation from the world, and their dedication to the service of Christ, of which their baptism is a sign.

It appears now that we have a better warrant for the baptism of children than human authority; that it is not a corruption of a divine institution; and that they who confine it to adults are chargeable with wresting from believing parents and their offspring, a privilege which God has granted to the spiritual, as well as to the natural posterity of Abraham.

* Acts xvi. 15, 33. † 1 Cor. i. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. vii. 14.

LECTURE LXXXIX.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

Baptism Administered in Name of the Trinity.—Meaning and Import of the Words Used.—Who may Baptize.—Lay Baptism; Baptism by Heretics.—Place of Baptism.—Sponsors.—The Blessings of Regeneration; Pardon, Adoption, and Resurrection to Life, Signified by Baptism.—Duties of the Baptized.

The symbol in baptism is water, which is applied to the body by aspersion or affusion, and has been chosen, as will afterwards appear, as an expressive sign of internal purification. I proceed to state that the ordinance is to be administered in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. At our reception into the communion of the church, there is a solemn recognition of the blessed Trinity, and a distinct mention of the three persons of the Godhead, as one in essence and equal in power and authority. The order in which they are enumerated, corresponds to the order of subsistence, which we do not understand, but according to which the Father is the first, the Son begotten of the Father is the second, and the Spirit proceeding from both is the third. This is not the proper place for demonstrating the divinity of the second and the third persons of the Trinity, but we cannot pass on without remarking, that one proof is furnished by baptism. They are associated with the first person in the same religious ordinance. We are called to look up to them all with equal reverence, to expect the blessings signified and sealed from them all, and to consider ourselves as brought under obligations to give them all the same homage and obedience. Can it be believed, that, as some affirm, the Son is only a man like ourselves, and the Holy Ghost is an angel or merely a name for a divine operation upon the mind? Has our Lord commanded us to be baptized in the name of God, of a creature, and of a manifestation of divine power?

It may be deemed questionable, whether the express mention of all the persons of the Trinity is essential to baptism; because in the Acts, when Paul baptized some of the disciples of John, he is said to have baptized them "in the name of the Lord Jesus."* It may, however, be supposed that the historian gives only an abbreviated form; and it is probable, that the Apostles would adhere to the terms of their original commission. There was no reason why they should deviate from it; and we take the course which becomes us, when we literally follow the instructions of Him who gave this ordinance to his church.

The expression in the original is not εν τω ονοματι,† but εις το ονομα.‡ It has been remarked, that these two forms of expression are of different import: that the former denotes the impulsive cause of an action, and the latter the object, or final cause of it. Whether εν, and εις should be thus distinguished, when they are joined with the noun ονομα, I will not pretend to determine; but it is certain that the one preposition is sometimes used for the other, or that εις is used when εν would have expressed the meaning equally well. If we adopt the common translation of the phrase, it will signify that we are baptized by the authority of the persons of the Trinity. It is worthy of attention, that when ονομα occurs in connexion with baptism, the expression commonly is εις το ονομα; and the words of the

* Acts xix. 5. † In the name. ‡ To the name.

Apostolic commission may be rendered, "baptizing them *to* the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The meaning may be collected by a reference to the words of Paul to the Corinthians: "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized to the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius, lest any of you should say, that I baptized in my own name."* These questions were suggested by the schism among the Corinthians, of whom some said, "I am of Paul, and others, I am of Apollos;" and to convince them of the folly and sinfulness of their conduct, the Apostle reminds them that they were not baptized to his name, initiated by that ordinance into the faith and profession of his religion, but into the service of Christ, who alone should for this reason be acknowledged as their Master. There is, however, one instance of a different form of expression, which may give rise to a suspicion that εις το ονομα and εν τω ονοματι are equivalent, and that the alleged distinction between them is rather fanciful than real. When the Holy Ghost had fallen upon Cornelius and his company, Peter "commanded them to be baptized *in the name of the Lord*,"† εν τω ονοματι του Κυριου. It is possible, however, that there was a design in using both expressions, and that they were intended to convey different ideas; εν τω ονοματι denoting the authority from which the ordinance has proceeded, and εις το ονομα, the object to which we are dedicated in it.

The administration of baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, signifies that we are baptized by the authority of the persons of the Holy Trinity. They all concurred in giving this institution to the church, as they all cooperated in our salvation, of which it is a sign. It is a memorial of the love of the Father, in sending his Son to be the Saviour of the world, of the love of the Son in assuming our nature and dying for our sins, and of the love of the Spirit in coming forth to purify our souls. The united wisdom, and power, and grace of the subsistences in the Divine essence, were displayed in the redemption of fallen man, and our admission to the new covenant is their conjunct act.

Again, the administration of baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, signifies that we are baptized into the faith and profession of the Holy Trinity. We are baptized to their name. This mysterious doctrine of our religion, that there are three Persons in one undivided essence, equal in power and glory, is explicitly and solemnly recognised: and it follows, that whoever afterwards denies this fundamental truth under whatever pretext, whoever ascribes divinity to the Father alone, and pronounces the Son and the Spirit to be inferior to him, renounces the faith which he was bound by the most sacred engagements to maintain. But a simple acknowledgment of the Trinity does not fulfil the design of our baptism. We are required to regard the persons of the Godhead with devout affections, corresponding to the manifestations of them in redemption; to look up with reverence and love to the Father as our Father; to feel our obligations to the Son, and to depend upon him alone for pardon and eternal life; and to expect from the Holy Ghost those gracious operations and aids, by which we shall be sanctified and prepared for heaven, and those consolations which will be a source of peace and transcendent happiness, amidst the difficulties and distresses of life.

In a word, the administration of baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; imports that we are dedicated to the service of those Divine persons; that we are engaged to offer religious worship to them, as separately and conjunctly the proper objects of it, and to yield unreserved and unintermitted obedience to their law, as revealed in the Scriptures. Baptism, which is denominated a seal of the covenant, ought to be viewed in the light of a federal transaction. On the one hand the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, promise to bestow upon the baptized the blessings of salvation, of which water is a symbol; and on the other hand, they come under an engagement "to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded us."

Before I proceed to speak of the blessings which are signified and sealed by baptism, it may be proper to inquire to whom it belongs by right to administer this ordinance. The catechism of the Council of Trent, having stated that bishops and priests have a right to baptize, and that deacons may baptize with their consent, goes on to say, "that the lowest rank is of those, who on an urgent necessity may baptize, but without the use of the solemn ceremonies. Of this sort are all persons, yea even of the lay-people, whether men or women, what sect soever they profess; for this power is permitted even to Jews, infidels, and heretics, when necessity compels, provided that in doing so they intend to do what the catholic church does in that kind of administration."* In particular this office is assigned to midwives, "who are allowed to baptize in the presence of a man who is unskilful in the performance of this sacrament, although such liberty is not granted to other females."† This is what is called obstetrical baptism, from the Latin word *obstetrix*, which signifies a midwife. In the ancient church lay-baptism was held valid although irregular; but the baptism of women, and of Jews and infidels, was rejected.

The admission of persons not invested with the sacred office to baptize, originated in the notion of the absolute necessity of this rite to salvation. Hence, the above catechism says, "We may admire the exceeding wisdom and goodness of our Lord in admitting these to baptize; for, seeing this sacrament must necessarily be received of all, as he appointed water to be the matter of it, than which nothing can be more common, so also would he have no one excluded from the administration of it, although it be not lawful for all to use the solemn ceremonies; not as though the rites and ceremonies are of more dignity, but that they are of less necessity than the sacrament."‡ This inducement to such a disorderly practice, does not exist among us, who believe, that although baptism being a Divine institution, no adult person could safely neglect it; yet it is not so connected with salvation, that unbaptized children are excluded from the kingdom of heaven. We cannot persuade ourselves that the salvation of infants is so much in the power of their parents, that they can deprive them of eternal life by their carelessness or deliberate wickedness. Baptism is only a sign of the communication of spiritual blessings; and we entertain no doubt, that as the sign is not always accompanied with the thing signified, so the thing signified is often enjoyed without the sign. We do not, with Papists and too many Protestants, and particularly with some half-popish Divines of the Church of England, hold the strange and unscriptural opinion, which is too much countenanced by the language of their liturgy, that baptism is regeneration. In the office of baptism, the priest prays that God would give "his Holy Spirit to this infant, that he may be born again;" and after baptism says, "Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits." "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father,

* 1 Cor. i. 13—15. † Acts x. 48.

* Cat. Concil. Trid. Pars ii. *de Sacram.* § 22.
† Ib. § 24. ‡ Ib. § 23.

that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy church." We maintain that, as many of the Jews were uncircumcised in heart, so many children of Christians are unbaptized in heart; and we see melancholy and irresistible proof of the fact in their subsequent conduct. We are convinced, that there is a baptism of the Spirit distinct from the baptism of water; that the former does not always accompany the latter; and that God gives the Spirit to whom he pleases, without limiting the gift to the use of the sign. "Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance," says our Confession of Faith, "yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated."*

If it were once admitted, that baptism is not absolutely necessary to salvation, the practice of allowing laymen, women, Jews, and infidels, to baptize would be given up without reluctance. In this, as in many other cases, one error has led to another. But we object to the practice on another ground, namely, that it is an invasion of the right of the ministers of religion, to whom alone it belongs to conduct the worship of the church, and dispense the ordinances. They only have authority to administer baptism, who have received a commission from Christ to preach the Gospel. These two parts of the office are joined together, and should be exercised by the same persons: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them." Such were the words of Christ to the Apostles; and he addressed them as the first in a long succession of individuals, who, although not endowed with miraculous powers, were to be employed in performing the ordinary functions of religion. The work of the ministry in all its departments, is committed to pastors and teachers, by whom it has been carried on since Apostles, and Prophets, and Evangelists ceased. There seems to be no reason, except the unscriptural idea that baptism regenerates *ex opere operato*,† and is consequently of absolute necessity to salvation,—there seems to be no reason why laymen should be permitted to baptize, and not be permitted also to celebrate the Eucharist; a liberty which, so far as I know, no church ever conceded to them. Lay-baptism ought to be held invalid; and, were a case of this kind to occur, the person should be baptized again by a lawful minister of Christ.

There is a more intricate question respecting baptism by heretics, which gave rise to a keen controversy in the primitive church. Doubts of its validity had been for sometime entertained; but, in the third century, the Christians in Asia came to a decision, in more than one Council, that all heretics should be re-baptized before their admission into the communion of the Catholic Church. Stephen, who was then bishop of Rome, was filled with indignation, and proceeded to ex-communicate the Asiatics; but their cause was espoused by Cyprian and the other bishops of Africa, who, in defiance of the threatenings of Stephen, pronounced baptism administered by heretics to be void of all efficacy and validity. It was finally determined by the Council of Nice, that those who had been baptized by heretics, should be received into the church simply by the imposition of hands; with the exception of the followers of Paul of Samosata, whom the Council commanded to be re-baptized, because his sect did not acknowledge the Trinity. Those who maintained the invalidity of the baptism of heretics, comprehended under this denomination all the sects which had separated from the great body of Christians; for the character was applied in those times with great latitude, and was sometimes given to worthy persons, who opposed prevailing errors and superstitions. The decree of the Council gave a sanction to the baptism of all the different societies of professed Christians, and excepted those alone by whom the ordinance was essentially corrupted. Some are said to have baptized "in the name of the uncreated God, and in the name of the created Son, and in the name of the sanctifying Spirit, who was created by the created Son;" others, "in the name of the Father the only true God, of Jesus Christ the Saviour and a creature, and of the Holy Ghost the servant of both;" and others, "in the name of the Father, by the Son, and in the Holy Ghost."

It is evident that baptism administered in such forms, is not Christian baptism. It is essentially defective, because it sets aside the doctrine of the Trinity, into the profession of which our Lord commanded his disciples to be baptized. There is, however, considerable difficulty in settling the general question respecting the validity of baptism. Where the form is exactly observed, may it not be vitiated by the administrator, although he bear the character of a minister of Christ? Is every man to be recognized as a minister of Christ, having authority to officiate in his name, who is called such? the man who errs in the fundamental doctrines of religion, the man who holds the Trinity, but is guilty of idolatry, and is tainted with all the pollutions of the Romish Church? It seems to be generally agreed not to scrutinize this matter too minutely, and to admit baptism administered by any person who holds the office of the ministry in the church to which he belongs, and who observes the form prescribed by our Saviour, although it may be encumbered with superstitious rites.

With respect to the place of baptism, it may be observed, that as soon as the Christians had churches, it was administered in them, before the congregation of the faithful, and the practice of baptizing in private houses was condemned. The law, however, was remitted in favour of the sick and infirm, and might be dispensed with by the authority of the bishop. Our Church retains this law; and private baptism is one of the five articles of Perth, which were abjured by our fathers at the renovation of the National Covenant. The Scripture gives no direction relative to this matter; but it is more consonant to the design of the ordinance, which is a recognition of the baptized as members of the church, that it should be publicly celebrated. It has been alleged, as an argument for the public administration of baptism, that it should be preceded by the preaching of the word; and an appeal is made to the commission of the Apostles, "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them." I would advise you, for the credit of your understandings, never to make use of this argument.

The word translated *to teach*, signifies, *to make disciples*. As men can be made disciples of Christ only by teaching, it is certainly implied that they should be taught before they are baptized; but the sense of the passage is totally misapprehended, when it is understood to mean that baptism must be accompanied with the preaching of a sermon. Christ commands his Apostles to instruct men, before they receive them into his Church; and some sage commentators conclude that we must preach to adults when we baptize children! This is undoubtedly admirable reasoning.

There is no fixed time for the administration of baptism. In ancient times, some maintained, that as children were circumcised, so they should be baptized, on the eighth day after their birth. It was proposed by others, that it should be deferred for three years; and many put it off to old age, and to their last illness, from an idea that they should obtain

* Conf. xxviii. § 5.
† By the external observance of the ordinance.

at once the forgiveness of all their sins. It became the common practice to baptize at Easter all who had been born since the last return of that festival, except in cases of necessity, when baptism was performed at any season of the year. I shall only observe, that as, on the one hand, indecent haste should be avoided, which would seem to imply a belief that baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation; so, on the other hand, parents should beware of unnecessary delay, and should embrace an early opportunity of dedicating their offspring to God.

The persons by whom children should be presented in baptism, are their parents, and not sponsors, who in the ancient church were called *αναδοχοι, susceptores,** and are known in the Church of England by the names of godfathers and godmothers. It is in the right of their parents that children are baptized; parents are their natural guardians, and upon them the law of God imposes the duty of bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Sponsors are unknown to the Scriptures, and the part which they perform is truly ridiculous. Nothing can be more inconsistent with common sense, than to make them answer in the name of the speechless child. "Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works?" "I renounce them all." "Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only-begotten Son?" "All this I steadfastly believe." "Wilt thou then obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?" "I will."

I now proceed to inquire into the import of baptism, or what blessings it signifies and seals.

The first blessing signified by baptism, as it is the first blessing promised in the new covenant, is regeneration. I call your attention to the following passage in the Epistle to Titus:—"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."† Here mention is made of the thing signified by baptism, and in such a manner as manifestly to allude to the ordinance itself. Not only is the Holy Ghost said to be "shed upon us," in reference to the description of his influences by the metaphor of water, but we are farther said to be saved by the "washing of regeneration." The original term, λουτρου signifies *a bath and the water contained in it*, and must be understood to refer to baptism, the only washing with water which is known in the Christian church; and the expression, the washing of regeneration, conjoined with the "renewing of the Holy Ghost," obviously teaches what baptism imports, namely, the purification of the soul from sin. I quote also the words of our Lord to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God."‡ The change which is declared to be necessary to qualify us for admission into the spiritual and heavenly kingdom of God, is called a second birth. The expression was not understood by Nicodemus, and still excites the surprise, and even the ridicule of some who profess to be like him, masters in Israel; but its meaning is easily apprehended by those who have studied the Scriptures with attention and humility. It signifies a moral change effected in the soul by the Spirit of God, who infuses into it a principle of divine life, rectifies the disorder of its faculties, and enables it to fulfil the purpose of its being by glorifying its Maker. It seems to be designated a new birth, to intimate that the subject of the change enters upon a new mode of existence, is introduced as it were into a new world, becomes a part of the new creation: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."* The agent is the Holy Ghost; but our Lord speaks "of water," as well as "of the Spirit." It is the opinion of some, that the same thing is expressed by different terms, agreeably to a phraseology not unfrequent in the scriptural style; but it is more probable that water is mentioned because it is the emblem of the influences of the Spirit. It has been objected, that there cannot be an allusion to baptism, because the institution of it was posterior to the interview with Nicodemus. But this is a mistake, originating in the supposition that it took its rise from the commission given to the Apostles after the resurrection, while it is to be dated from the commencement of our Saviour's ministry, and only received a new enactment prior to his ascension. To the conversation with Nicodemus, this remark is subjoined by the Evangelist: "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized."† From the passages now cited, it appears that baptism is significant of the regenerating influences of the Spirit.

A second blessing signified by baptism, is the forgiveness of sin. Peter said to the Jews, who were awakened by his sermon on the day of Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;"‡ and when Ananias was sent to Paul, after he had met the Lord in the way, he addressed him in the following words: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins."‖ It is not to be inferred from these passages, that remission is inseparably connected with baptism any more than regeneration, so that every person to whom it is administered, is immediately delivered from a state of condemnation. The idea is unscriptural, and is adopted only by those who are grossly ignorant of the economy of grace, in which God reserves to himself a right to give or withhold spiritual blessings according to his pleasure. But we are plainly taught, that it is a sign of remission, or that the application of water to the body, is a symbol of the purification of the soul from guilt, by the atoning blood of Christ. It holds out in figure, the means by which children are delivered from original sin, and adults from both original and actual. In the ark, "a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water; the like figure whereunto," says Peter, "even baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."§ It is the symbol of salvation; and those to whom the blessing signified by it is imparted, shall as certainly escape the avenging wrath of God, as Noah and his family escaped the destruction of the flood.

A third blessing signified by baptism, is admission into the family of God; for it represents our fellowship with Christ, through whom we become his children. It is the sign of our reception into the church, the part of the family which is upon earth; the other part, consisting of the spirits of just men made perfect, being in heaven. The visible church, comprehending a great proportion of ignorant and worldly-minded men, cannot be considered as entitled to this high character; but according to the constitution of its Founder, the true church is an assembly of persons who know and obey the truth, and in baptism we are enrolled among them. The voice of God says from heaven, "I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be

* Undertakers, or sureties. † Tit. iii. 4—6. ‡ John iii. 5.

* 2 Cor. v. 17. † John iii. 22. ‡ Acts ii. 38.
‖ Acts xxii. 16. § 1 Pet. iii. 21.

my sons and daughters." As an Israelitish male child was recognized by circumcision to be a descendant of Abraham, and one of the chosen people, so we are declared by baptism to be disciples of Christ, and members of the household of God: "By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."* As the baptism of water is the external sign of the baptism of the Spirit, it must represent what this internal baptism effects; and the Apostle teaches us, that by partaking of the Spirit, we are incorporated with the people of God of all nations and conditions. Baptism is therefore a recognition of our right to the privileges of adoption, which unquestionably belong to the members of his family, and, in particular, of our right to the external privileges of the church. In these, Jews, Mahometans, and Heathens, have no interest. They are strangers and foreigners; but the baptized are fellow-citizens with the saints. They are placed under the care of the ministers and rulers of the church, should be regarded by the members as brethren, and have an interest in their love and their prayers; they are admitted to the benefit of public and private instruction; they may claim, if adults, a place at the table of the Lord; and if children, are entitled to this other seal of the covenant as soon as they show themselves qualified for it by their attainments in knowledge, and the general propriety of their conduct. It has been objected against the administration of baptism to infants, that it can be of no advantage to them, because they are incapable of understanding, or even perceiving the transaction. But, besides that it may be productive of the most beneficial effects at a future period, when they come to know its meaning, and reflect upon its solemn obligations; it is of no small moment that it introduces them into the society of the people of God. If the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, we ought to set some value upon the prayers which are offered up by ministers and people for the young, who are to succeed them in the profession of the truth. If a religious education is of unspeakable benefit, it is one of the happy fruits of their baptism, in which their parents engaged to instil into their minds the principles of piety and morality. If the company of good men, their counsels, their admonitions, their example, are calculated to be useful, they enjoy these in consequence of their adoption into an association separated from the world lying in wickedness.

The last blessing signified by baptism, is a resurrection to eternal life. Some have supposed that there is a symbolical representation of this event in the rising of the baptized person from the water: but as it has appeared that this is not the scriptural mode of administering the ordinance, we may pronounce this idea to be altogether fanciful. Paul refers to a connexion between baptism and the resurrection of Christ, when, having said that we are buried with him by baptism into death, he adds, "If we have been planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."† He is speaking of our death to sin, and our life to righteousness, or of the spiritual change in the present state, of which baptism is a sign; but if it is expressive of one great effect of the resurrection of Christ, it may be very naturally considered as a pledge of all its blessed fruits, and, in particular, of a glorious immortality. The same Apostle says to the Colossians, "Ye are buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead,"‡ still signifying, that baptism imports our interest in the resurrection of Christ, and its consequences. It was called by the ancients, the earnest of good things to come, and the type of the future resurrection. May this not be the meaning of that passage in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, concerning which there has been such a diversity of opinion? "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not? why are they then baptized *for the dead?*"* Some of the Fathers understood the expression ὑπερ των νεκρων, to mean to be baptized *into the hope of the resurrection of the dead;* or what amounts to the same thing, to submit to baptism that they might fill up the places of those who had died, thus declaring their belief that they had not perished, but were alive in a better world, and their hope that, through Jesus Christ, to whom they dedicated themselves in baptism, they also should be raised again to enjoy the same glorious recompense. According to this view of the passage, a resurrection to life is one of the blessings signified and sealed by this institution. It assures us of a triumph over death and the grave, through the redeeming blood of Christ, with which we are sprinkled; and of admission into heaven, for which we are qualified by the washing of regeneration. It is the seal of God impressed upon the members of his family, to distinguish them from the heirs of perdition. Like the blood of the paschal lamb on the houses of the Israelites, it is a pledge of the safety of believers on that awful day, when sinners shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt, and, were it possible, would hide themselves again in the grave from the wrath of the Judge.

Let us inquire what are the obligations of baptism, or what are the duties incumbent upon those to whom it has been administered.

We have already remarked, that it is a federal rite, in which God promises to bestow upon men the blessings of the covenant of grace, and they come under an engagement to obey the law of the covenant. When an Israelite was circumcised, he was bound to keep the whole law, "for circumcision," says Paul, "verily profiteth if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision."† Baptism is of the same import, and ratifies our subjection to the authority of Christ, whose disciples we profess to be, and into the communion of whose church we are admitted. The commission to baptize all nations was connected with an injunction "to teach them to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them." To this federal transaction Peter alludes, when he says, that "baptism doth now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh but the *answer of a good conscience* toward God,"—συνειδησεως αγαθης επερωτημα.‡ Επερωτημα signifies *an interrogation*, and likewise *an answer to an interrogation*, and refers in the present case to the questions proposed to the candidates for baptism, of which we have a specimen in the words of Philip to the eunuch of Ethiopia, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." When an adult person could answer this question and others of a similar nature with a good conscience, baptism was to him an assurance of salvation. He had entered with an upright heart into the service of Christ, and should certainly receive the promised recompense.

First, Baptism implies an engagement to believe all the truths which Christ has revealed. It imports, as we have seen, a profession of our faith in the Trinity, a doctrine which, when viewed in its connexions and consequences, is found to involve all the other doctrines of Christianity. Being recognized as the disciples of Jesus, we publicly own him as our teacher, and place ourselves under his care, to receive his instructions without murmuring or disputing. Full confidence must

* 1 Cor. xii. 13. † Rom. vi. 5. ‡ Col. ii. 12.

* 1 Cor. xv. 29. † Rom. ii. 25. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

be placed in his wisdom as infallible, and obedience must be yielded to his authority without hesitation. The baptized ought to believe without demanding any other evidence but his testimony; to embrace every doctrine which he delivers, although its truth be not manifest to reason, nor deducible from its principles. The man who makes his own understanding the measure of his creed, who admits into it only what he deems plain and perspicuous articles, and rejects such as are mysterious, disregards the command which came from the excellent glory, and retracts the submission which he pledged in his baptism. In the early ages of the church, when converts from Judaism and Heathenism sought admission into it, the candidates for baptism were previously instructed in the principles of the Christian religion, and were required to make a public profession of their faith. Certain questions were proposed, to which satisfactory answers were expected. The formulary was different in different places; but the subject was the same, and is contained in the creed, which goes under the name of the Apostles', although it was not composed by them. It is a summary of what was considered to be the doctrine of the Apostles, and of the faith which the members of the church were bound to profess and maintain.

Secondly, Baptism implies an engagement to observe the ordinances of Christ. When we enter into a new society, we pledge ourselves to conform to its laws and usages. When a Heathen was baptized, he renounced polytheism and idolatry, and bound himself henceforth to worship the living and true God, through his Son the only Mediator. When a Jew was baptized, he renounced the altar, the priesthood, and the obligations of the law, that he might offer spiritual sacrifices, in the name and through the intercession of the High Priest of our profession. As Christ is the Supreme Lord of the church, it belongs to him only to appoint religious ordinances; and consequently, the engagement of which we are speaking, extends no farther than his will as expressed in the Scriptures; it imposes no obligation upon us to observe any of the inventions of men in religion. Baptism does not introduce us into the particular society of Christians by whose ministers it is dispensed, but into the Catholic church; and the duties arising from it are exclusively those which are incumbent upon all the followers of Christ, without any reference to the peculiarities of a party. We are not baptized into the observance of the rites and ceremonies, or into the belief of the erroneous dogmas of the church in which we happen to be born. Baptism is our dedication to Christ; and its design is fulfilled, when, adhering closely to his institutions, we worship the Father in Spirit and in truth.

Lastly, Baptism implies an engagement to obey the commandments of Christ. In the primitive church the candidate was solemnly asked, "Dost thou renounce the devil, and his pomp and his service, and dost thou join thyself to Christ?" and upon his returning an affirmative answer to these questions, baptism was administered to him. After having reminded Christians of their baptism, as expressive of their communion with Christ in his death and resurrection, Paul addresses the following exhortations to them: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof; neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."* As the ear of the Hebrew servant who loved his master was bored, to denote that he was to remain in his house during his life, so, by the command of Christ, water is sprinkled or poured upon us, to signify that we are dedicated to his service for ever.

Baptism, like circumcision, is administered but once; not, as Papists maintain, because it impresses an indelible character upon the soul, or a mystical quality by which the baptized are fitted for the service of God, conformed to Christ, and distinguished from others; but because regeneration, of which it is significant, is not repeated, and the obligations under which it places us can never be disannulled.

Although children are insensible of the transaction, and can therefore at the time derive no moral benefit from it, yet reflection upon it at a subsequent period may be productive of the happiest effects. To a mind seriously disposed, it must be an affecting consideration, that almost as soon as we entered upon life, we were received into the church of the living God, placed under the dispensation of grace, and consecrated to our Creator and Redeemer. The situation is evidently calculated to awaken sentiments of gratitude, and to call forth our most fervent wishes and diligent endeavours, that the merciful intention of Heaven with respect to us may be accomplished. If a young person attend to the circumstances in which he is placed, he will feel that he is not at liberty to choose his own manner of life, to dispose of himself according to his own pleasure; but is under engagements which it will be his interest to fulfil, and which he cannot violate without great guilt and inexpressible danger.

The baptism of children is calculated to produce the best effects upon parents. It places their children in a new relation to them, and presents them under a new aspect. Parents are now their spiritual guardians, appointed to superintend their eternal as well as their temporal interests. Their children are a sacred deposit, and are not so much theirs as the Lord's, for whose service it is their chief business to prepare them. Their own concern in the solemn transaction, is a powerful appeal to their consciences, and calls for their active endeavours to accomplish the design with which they presented them to be baptized. Some disapprove of exacting any vow or promise from parents, and administer the ordinance with a simple declaration of their duty. It is not a matter of much moment whether they come under a verbal engagement or not, because the law of God previously binds them, and their appearance is a recognition of their obligations. In the act of giving their children to the Lord, they virtually promise to educate them for his service, and to make their souls, still more than their bodies, the objects of solicitude.

* Rom. vi. 11—13.

LECTURE XC.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Institution and Primitive Simplicity of the Rite.—Its Gradual Corruption.—Transubstantiation.—Meaning of the Words of Institution.—Its Contrariety to the Language of Scripture, to Reason, and to Common Sense.—Pascal's Defence of it Examined.

Our Lord, having eaten the passover with his disciples the evening on which he was betrayed, instituted the sacred supper, to be a memorial of his sufferings, a sign of his presence with the church, and a seal of the new covenant which he was to confirm the next day with his blood. An account of it is given by the Evangelists; but that which I shall lay before you, as the most distinct and complete, is found in one of the Epistles of Paul, to whom it had been com-

municated by our Saviour himself. "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night on which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."*

It is evident from the words of the institution, that it was intended to be a perpetual ordinance. Accordingly we learn from the Scriptures that it was observed in the Apostolical church; and we know that from those days down to the present time, it has been celebrated by his professed disciples without interruption. In the primitive church, the original institution was retained in its simplicity, as we see from the second apology of Justin Martyr, who wrote early in the second century. No ceremonies were added to render it more sacred and venerable in the eyes of the people; no false notions were entertained of its design; no mystery was supposed to be concealed under the symbols and the prescribed actions; the words of Christ were understood according to the meaning which common sense would put upon them, and the ordinance was regarded as a memorial of his passion, and a means of strengthening the faith and increasing the love of his followers. That Father, indeed, informs us, that they did not receive the bread ὡς κοινον αρτον and the cup, ὡς κοινον πομα, "as common bread and wine;" but it is plain that he did not consider them as sacred in consequence of any change which they had undergone in their nature, but solely on account of the purpose to which they were applied, and their sacramental relation to our Saviour. That he looked upon them, although not common, as still bread and wine, appears from his calling them expressly "nourishment," by which our flesh and blood are nourished through their conversion into our substance.

In this light the elements were received for several ages after the days of Justin Martyr, as is manifest from many passages which have been quoted from the Fathers, and which show, that they considered them as still bread and wine, and as having acquired the names of the body and blood of the Lord only in consequence of his appointment, and their sanctification by the offices of the ministers of religion. In process of time highly figurative language began to be used, which, if literally understood, imported a corporeal presence of Christ; and such modes of expression were employed to excite the greater reverence for the institution, and it may be, in some cases, to display the eloquence of the speaker or writer. A notion was adopted by some, and brought forward in the controversy with the Eutychians, that there was a union between Christ and the elements, similar to that between the divine and human nature in his person. Now, although this notion supposed the elements to remain unchanged, to be bread and wine after as well as before consecration, as the human nature retains its essence and properties notwithstanding its personal subsistence in the divine; yet, it manifestly prepared the way, in connexion with the rhetorical language mentioned above, for the idea of a real transmutation which was afterwards broached. Ignorance was fast spreading over the Eastern, and particularly the Western church. Men without learning, and with only a form of religion, were the fit subjects of delusion, and would receive with little hesitation the most absurd and incredible opinions, if they were recommended by an air of mystery, and enjoined by the authority of priests.

It was in the ninth century that a real change of the substance of the elements in the Lord's Supper, was first openly and explicitly maintained. The author of this heresy was Pascasius Radbert, abbot of Corbey in France, who, in a treatise concerning the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, taught "that after the consecration of the bread and wine, nothing remained of these symbols but the outward figure, under which the body and blood of Christ were really and locally present; and that the body of Christ thus present in the eucharist, was the same body which was born of the virgin, suffered on the cross, and was raised from the dead."* This novel opinion met with powerful opposition from many distinguished persons of the age. In particular, by the command of the emperor Charles the Bold, Johannes Scotus, and Ratramn or Bertram, composed treatises with a view to state the true doctrine of the eucharist. The work of Scotus has perished; but that of Ratramn is preserved, and gives the same view of the subject which is adopted by the Protestant churches.† But the monstrous notion of Radbert accorded with the love of mystery, which has so powerful an influence upon a great part of mankind; and it was so well calculated to increase veneration for the clergy, and to consolidate their dominion over the people, that although clearly refuted, it would not be easily abandoned by those whose interest it was to maintain it. Revolting as it is to common sense, as well as contrary to the faith of the church in the preceding ages, it obtained powerful patronage, was gradually diffused among the nations of the west, and was finally established as an article of faith in the Church of Rome, under the name of Transubstantiation. It received its final sanction from the Council of Trent, which enacted the two following decrees. "If any man shall deny that in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, there are contained truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore a whole Christ; and shall say that they are only in it as in a sign, or by a figure, or virtually; let him be accursed." Again, "If any man shall say that in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, there remains the substance of the bread and wine, together with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and shall deny the wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and the whole substance of the wine into the blood, the species of bread and wine only remaining, which conversion the catholic church most fitly calls Transubstantiation; let him be accursed."‡

The doctrine of transubstantiation, which was at first rudely exhibited, required time, and labour, and ingenuity, to mould it into its present form. In order to explain it more distinctly, let me request your attention to the following particulars.

First, The Church of Rome teaches that the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ is not a sign or figure, as is the case in other sacraments, and particularly in baptism, in which water represents the influences of the Holy Ghost; but that the true body and blood of Christ are really and substantially present. Communicants receive not the sign, but the thing signified, for here they are identified.

Secondly, Whereas the eye sees nothing but bread and wine, Papists farther teach, that the substance of the elements is annihilated, and only the *species* remain. There is merely an appearance of bread and wine. The accidents, namely, the colour, the taste,

* 1 Cor. xi. 23—26.

* Mosheim, Cent. ix. chap. iii. § 19.
† Lib. *de Corpore*, 224, 284, et passim.
‡ Concil. Trid. Sess. 13. *de Euchar.* cap. viii. can. 1, 2.

the smell, the shape, are miraculously retained, while that which supported them is taken away. Our senses assure us that bread and wine are before us; but faith tells us that these are the incarnate Redeemer himself. We have accidents without a substance.

Thirdly, The Church of Rome teaches another mystery with respect to the corporeal presence of Christ. It has been always understood to be an essential property of body to be extended, as it consists of parts placed beyond parts, which must occupy a certain portion of space; and such, therefore, it is acknowledged, is the body of our Saviour in heaven. But in the Eucharist, as they suppose, his body is present without extension. As we have seen that accidents may subsist without matter, so, it seems, matter may subsist without accidents; or in other words, although extension is a property of body, there may be a body which is not extended. The body of Christ is present in the Eucharist, after the manner of a spirit; it does not fill up the space left vacant by the annihilation of the substance of the elements; that space is a pure vacuum, or is filled only by the accidents. Hence it follows, that the division of the elements does not divide the body and blood of Christ, for that which is not extended is not frangible and separable; but, in every particle of the bread, and in every drop of the wine, the whole body and blood of Christ are contained. If you should not comprehend all this, I cannot help it. It is enough to have stated fairly the doctrine of the Church. I am not obliged to make you understand what is absolutely unintelligible.

Fourthly, The change is effected when the following words are pronounced: "This is my body"—"This is my blood." Till this moment the elements were truly what they appeared to be, bread and wine; but as soon as the words are finished, they are transubstantiated. The words are evidently declarative; but Papists consider them as productive or creative. A virtue goes forth with them to effect the wonderful change, as it accompanied the words of the Apostles when they commanded the diseased to be whole; but the miracle is far more extraordinary than any which they performed, because nobody sees it, and still all are bound to believe it. When a common juggler performs his feats, one substance vanishes, and another appears in its place; but this is the wonder of wonders, that here there is a change of substances, yet no change is perceived, and all things continue exactly as they were. This is a happy circumstance for the Popish jugglers, as no dexterity is necessary to impose upon the senses, and all that is required is a sufficient degree of credulity in the spectators.

In defence of this doctrine, Papists appeal to the words of institution, and affirm that they must be understood in their obvious and literal sense. "This is my body," must mean, "This is truly my body;" and "This is my blood," "This is truly my blood." Yet, even they will not contend that other passages of Scripture, in which the phraseology is similar, should be subjected to the same rigid interpretation. They never suppose that, when our Lord said, "I am the vine," "I am the way," "I am the door," he meant us to understand that he is literally a vine, a way, and a door; but readily concede that we should put a spiritual sense upon such passages. It belongs, therefore, to them to assign a satisfactory reason why the same liberty should not be granted in explaining the words of institution. It may, indeed, be more justly claimed in the present than in any other case, because the words confessedly relate to a sacrament, in which symbols are employed; and nothing is more natural than to give the name of the thing signified to the sign.

It has been remarked, that, in the Hebrew and the Syriac, a dialect of which was spoken by our Lord, there is no word which expresses to *denote*, *signify*, or *represent*, and that its place is supplied by the verb of existence. When we would say, this thing *signifies* another thing, the Jews said, this thing *is* another thing. Thus the seven good kine and the seven ill-favoured kine in Pharaoh's dream, "are seven years,"* that is, signify seven years of fertility or barrenness; the ten horns in Daniel, "are ten kings,"† or, are emblems of them; "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches,"‡ the stars and the candlesticks being representatives of the angels and the churches. There is one passage in particular which exactly resembles the words under consideration, and is a sure guide in the interpretation of them, as it expressly refers to that ordinance, in the room of which the Lord's Supper has succeeded. Moses said of the paschal lamb, "It is the Lord's passover,"‖ just as our Saviour said of the bread, "This is my body." The passover was the act of God, who passed over the houses of the Israelites; the lamb was only a memorial of it, and was so understood by every Israelite. Now, if we reflect that the Jews were accustomed, in this case to call the sign by the name of the thing signified, we shall perceive that the disciples were in no danger of mistaking their Master's meaning, when he called the bread, his body; that they must have instantly understood his design, and known that nothing more was intended than to constitute the bread a sign or memorial of his body, especially as he added, "This do in remembrance of me." The two expressions are so perfectly alike, that it is impossible to put any sense upon the one which may not be put upon the other; and it would be as rational to infer from the former, that the paschal lamb was God himself in the act of passing over the houses of the Israelites, as it would be to infer from the latter, that the bread is the very body of Christ which was born of the virgin, and nailed to the cross. It is evident that the disciples understood him simply to mean, that the bread was a sign and memorial of his body, from the circumstance that they expressed no surprise, and stated no objection, as they would have done if the doctrine of transubstantiation had occurred to them; and as the Jews did on another occasion when they interpreted literally what he had said about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. "The Jews, therefore, strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"§ The Jews in modern times retain their ancient idiom, and say that a thing is, when it only signifies or represents. At the celebration of the passover they speak thus of the unleavened cakes which they use on that occasion: "This is the bread," that is, a memorial of the bread, "of poverty and affliction, which our fathers did eat in Egypt."

The language of the New Testament, in other places where the Lord's Supper is mentioned, is so far from favouring the doctrine of transubstantiation, that it expressly overthrows it. It is synecdochically called the breaking of bread; but this designation would be improper and false if there was a change of the substance, because then it would not be bread which was broken, but the true body of Christ. The Apostle Paul calls the symbol of our Saviour's body, bread, not only before but also after consecration.¶ Papists will allow that it is properly called bread before, but how can they account for the retaining of the name after the substance of bread is annihilated? Would they allow any member of their Church to call the consecrated wafer, bread? I presume that if he should dare to speak the language of the Apostle, he would be suspected of heresy, and compelled by threats and

* Gen. xli. 26, 27. † Dan. vii. 24. ‡ Rev. i. 20.
‖ Exod. xii. 11. § John vi. 52. ¶ 1 Cor. xi. 26–28.

punishment to recant; and hence we may conclude, that Paul's ideas on the subject were very different from those of the Pope and his priests. He has explained himself in another place, in such a manner as to satisfy any reasonable man. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"* The manifest import of these words is, that by partaking of the symbols of his body and blood, we have fellowship with him in his atoning sacrifice, and all its precious fruits.

Papists draw an argument for transubstantiation from the words of our Lord, in the sixth chapter of John, where he speaks of himself under the figure of bread which had come down from heaven, and then adds, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."† "When, therefore," says the Catechism of Pius the Fifth, "in so plain and clear words he called his flesh, bread, and true meat, and his blood, true drink, it might well seem sufficient to declare that there remains no substance of bread and wine in the sacrament."‡ But the compilers of that catechism, and all Papists who make use of this argument, should have read the whole discourse, and read it attentively, and considered the occasion on which it was delivered: and they would have found that it has no relation to the Eucharist, and that instead of upholding, it overthrows their doctrine. It was delivered before the institution of the Eucharist; and to suppose that he spoke of it by anticipation, is to represent him as speaking unintelligibly from design, as he must have known that it was impossible for any person present to understand him. It is plain that he spoke of the benefits which were to result to the human race from his death, and of the spiritual participation of them by faith; for he says, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."‖ It is farther evident, that the Eucharist is not the subject of discourse, from two passages, of which the one declares, that "unless we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have no life in us;" and the other says, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."§ If these passages refer to the sacrament of the Supper, it follows, that no man can be saved unless he partake of it, and that every person who does partake of it, shall be raised to immortal life. I do not know whether Papists will admit the first of these inferences, but the last they will reject; and if they would therefore explain Scripture, not by detached expressions, but according to its connexion and harmony, they must allow that our Saviour does not intend the sacramental eating of his flesh, but the cordial belief of his doctrine, which is frequently represented by the metaphors of eating and drinking. The Jews, it appears, understood what he had said in the same carnal sense which the Church of Rome annexes to the words of institution. Like the members of that Church, they took all grossly and literally, being equally incapable as they of apprehending the spiritual meaning. Misled by their own error, they were astonished, and no doubt shocked; as they well might be if theirs had been the just interpretation of his words. But our Lord told them that they were mistaken; and, as if with a view to reprove such of his professed followers as should afterwards dream of a real manducation of his body, he said, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."¶ The meaning obviously is, that his words, which had given so much offence, were to be understood in a spiritual sense; that he did not speak of a literal eating of his body; and that, although such a thing had been practicable, it would have been productive of no salutary effect. Thus he overturns the whole fabric of transubstantiation, so far as it is founded upon this, and consequently upon any other passage; for his words must be spiritually understood elsewhere as well as here, the reason being always the same. As the supposed change of the elements is false, so it is pronounced by him to be useless. "The flesh profiteth nothing."

It is sufficient to show, that transubstantiation receives no support from Scripture, and is founded on such a perversion of its language as can be accounted for, only by the ignorance and superstition of the age when this monstrous opinion was invented. But there are several other objections against this doctrine, which fully justify the Protestant churches in rejecting it.

First, It destroys the nature of a sacrament. Two things are necessary to a sacrament, a sign and a thing signified, an object presented to our senses and some promised blessing which is represented and sealed by it. This definition is admitted by the Church of Rome. The catechism of Pope Pius says, that, according to the Latin doctors, sacraments might conveniently be called "sensible signs, which work or effect that grace which at the same time they signify;" and it adopts the definition of Augustine, which has been universally followed, that "a sacrament is a visible sign of a holy thing," or "a visible sign of an invisible grace."* Baptism accords with this definition, for water represents the purifying influences of the Spirit, and the sign is distinct from the thing signified. But by transubstantiation the sign is miraculously taken away, and the thing signified is put in its place. We say that the bread is a sign of the body of Christ; but Papists affirm that it is his body itself. It is true that there is still an appearance of bread, but it is only an appearance; and, besides that it would be strange and harsh to maintain, that a fallacious appearance is a sign given by God himself to his church, it would be absurd to make a thing the sign of itself. But this Papists do, while they hold that there is nothing real before us but the very body of Christ. Thus the Lord's Supper is no sacrament at all. The symbols are annihilated, and the substance occupies their place.

Secondly, Transubstantiation implies some things which are contrary to the clearest notions of mankind, founded upon experience. It is by experience that we come to know what are the properties of body. Now there are three things respecting it, about which no doubt was ever entertained by any philosopher who was possessed of common sense. The first is, that a body is confined to a particular place. It has figure, and is bounded by lines describing the portion of space which it occupies. It may be transported from one place to another; but it appears to us as impossible that it should be in two places at the same time, in Europe and in America, in heaven and on earth, as that two and two should make five. The second thing concerning body, of which reason informs us, is that it is extended. It consists of parts, each of which fills a certain portion of space; and the portion is greater or less, according to the aggregate of parts. To suppose matter to exist without extension, is as unintelligible as to suppose it to exist without divisibility. The third thing, which is equally evident with the other two, is, that the qualities of matter are dependent upon matter. We know indeed only the qualities of matter; but we necessarily conclude that there is something to which they belong, a substratum by which they are supported. We can form no conception of whiteness, if

*1 Cor. x. 16. †John vi. 51.
‡Cat. Concil. Trident. Pars ii. *De Euch. Sacram.* § 37.
‖John vi. 35. §Ib. 53, 54. ¶Ib. 63.

* Pars ii. *de Sacram.* § 3, 5.

there is nothing white; of roundness, if there is nothing round; of extension, if there is nothing extended. To imagine that there may be accidents without a substance, is not more rational than to imagine that there may be thought without a thinking being, and would lead us into the ideal philosophy, which affirms that there is no external world, and that the objects which appear to be without us, are only sensations or perceptions of the mind excited by some unknown cause.

Transubstantiation is at variance with these dictates of reason. First, It supposes a body to be, at the same time, in more places than one. It is in heaven at the right hand of God, and it is on earth on the altars of the Romish Church. It does not come down from heaven to earth; but it remains in heaven, and yet is upon earth. It is present, not in one place on earth only, but in a thousand places, in the east and the west, the north and the south; wherever a priest has, with a due intention, pronounced the words of institution. It is not present, as a piece of matter may be, by being divided into different parts, and carried hither and thither; but it is wholly present in Rome, wholly present in Paris, wholly present in this city, wholly present wherever mass is celebrated. I may add, that the human nature of Christ according to this doctrine, exists at the same moment in very different states. It is glorified on the throne of heaven, and humbled on the altar; it is seen and adored by the blessed spirits above, and concealed from men under the species of the elements. This simple statement is itself sufficient to show, that the wildest dream of a madman is not more absurd than the doctrine of transubstantiation. Secondly, It supposes, as I showed when giving you an account of the doctrine, that matter may subsist without extension. The body and blood of Christ are really and substantially present in the Eucharist; but they occupy no portion of space. It would have been natural to conclude, that when the elements are annihilated, their place was filled up with that into which they are changed; but wonderful as this would have been, we are required to believe something still more extraordinary. Here is the mystery of mysteries! We touch the bread and feel that it is a solid substance; but let us not mistake. It is not bread; it is not flesh; what is it? It is an assemblage of accidents, which have no substance, and are mere appearances. There is flesh indeed present; but it cannot be touched, for it is present after the manner of a spirit. You may divide this bread, or this flesh, or this assemblage of accidents, into a thousand parts; but in each of these parts the whole of Christ is contained. Now, what is this but to say, that there is matter which is not matter; that is, to assert, without disguise, the most palpable contradiction? A man may say that he believes it; but to do so is as impossible as to believe that a thing may be and not be at the same time. Lastly, The doctrine supposes that the properties of matter may be separated from it, and may subsist by themselves. Our senses tell us that the consecrated wafer is bread. It looks like bread, it tastes like bread, it smells like bread; but still it is not bread, but both flesh and blood, according to the doctrine of concomitance, which will be afterwards explained. What is more, the space which the bread originally occupied is a vacuum, for the body of Christ is present without extension. Here, then, we have extension where there is nothing extended; colour where there is nothing coloured; taste and smell where there is nothing saporific or fragrant. If any person should affirm it to be possible that a man's shape and features might continue to be visible, after he had removed out of sight, even Papists would pronounce him to be a fool or a madman; but they are unquestionably subject to the same charge, when they teach that all the properties of bread may remain after the bread itself is annihilated.

But Papists have recourse to a miracle, and tell us, that although these things respecting matter and its properties are true, according to the ordinary course of nature, God acts in this case, by his almighty power, in an extraordinary manner. We acknowledge that his power is infinite, that it can do many things which to us are inconceivable, that it is able to accomplish events in a manner different from, and contrary to, the course of nature. But observe, that it is one thing to be contrary to the course of nature, and another to be contrary to the nature of things. When God preserved the three Jewish confessors in a furnace, he did not change the nature of fire, or make it cold, but merely defended their bodies, in some way unknown to us, from its influence. When he made a piece of iron swim upon water, he did not render water solid or iron light, but supported it by his power, as a man might have done with his hand. There was no alteration of the essence and qualities of the substances which were the subjects of those miracles, but a suspension of the laws by which they are usually governed. The pretended miracle of transubstantiation is of a totally different description. It supposes a complete change of the nature of things. It supposes effects to be produced which are manifestly impossible, and which it is therefore no limitation even of Divine power to affirm that even it cannot perform. The just definition of almighty power is, that it can do every thing possible; things impossible are not the objects of power, any more than things which do not exist are the objects of sight. Now, it is contrary to the nature of body, that it should be in different places at the same time; for it necessarily enters into the idea of it, that it occupies a particular portion of space. It is contrary to its nature, that it should exist after the manner of a spirit, or without filling any portion of space; for extension is as essential to it as life is to a living being. It is contrary to its nature, that its properties should remain after it is annihilated; for its properties are modifications which as necessarily exist with their subject, as the shadow disappears with the body which projected it. The ubiquity of a particular body, is want of extension, and the continuance of its qualities after its destruction, are things absolutely impossible; and to appeal to the power of God, serves only to confound the minds of those who are too ignorant or too indolent to examine the subject with accuracy. These things even the power of God cannot do, because they cannot be done. They imply a contradiction; and we might with equal reason say, that although two and two are four, yet divine power could make them five. To every mind but that of a Papist, the contradiction is as manifest in the one case as in the other.

Thirdly, Transubstantiation contradicts the testimony of our senses, which assure us, as we have repeatedly observed, that there is no change of theelements. Our senses are the means by which we become acquainted with external things and their properties; and as we are instinctively led to confide in their evidence, so we find from experience, that the notices which they give us are true. The offices which they perform are of the most important nature. They are not only our guides in providing for the welfare of our bodies, and guarding against the dangers to which they are exposed; but it is by them that we perceive the proofs of the existence and perfections of God, in creation and providence; and to them were addressed the proofs of the supernatural communications which he has made to us concerning his gracious purposes, and the realities of the invisible world. If it be said, that our senses frequently deceive us, we acknowledge the fact, but deny that on this account their evidence should be suspected. They deceive us when they are in a diseased state, when their functions are carelessly performed, when the object is in such a situation as not to be fully

subjected to their test; but, in other circumstances, their testimony is infallible. No man whose eye is sound, supposes an object which is green to be red, or mistakes a bush for an animal, when it is near; no man in health calls sugar sour, or vinegar sweet. About these things there is no question, except among sceptical philosophers, who do not believe, or at least pretend not to believe, the evidence of their senses, while they rely upon it as implicitly as any of the vulgar.

The doctrine of transubstantiation subverts the evidence of our senses. We see bread and wine in the Eucharist; we smell them, and we taste them; and yet we are told that they are not bread and wine, but a collection of unsubstantial accidents, under which the body and blood of Christ are concealed. Here, then, is one case in which our senses deceive us, and how can we depend upon their testimony in any other case? If they have misled us once, they may mislead us a thousand times. Should it be said that the deception, for such we must call it, is in this instance effected by a miracle, it may be asked, How are we certain that we shall not be imposed upon by a miracle on other occasions? How shall we know when the notices of our senses are true, and when they are fallacious? If God had told us, that in this case alone he would impose upon our senses, but in all others would leave them to their natural operations, we might have been satisfied. But he has told us no such thing, and consequently we are reduced to the greatest perplexity. We can never be absolutely sure that objects are as they appear to us. What we imagine to be a tree, may be a man; what we suppose to be earth, may be water. We have no certainty that the miracles of Christ and his Apostles were really performed. Those who are said to have witnessed them, may have been the subjects of illusion; and it would not have been more wonderful if they had mistaken common occurrences for supernatural events, than it is that every time when the Holy Supper is celebrated, the incarnate Son of God should seem to be a piece of bread. Transubstantiation leads to downright scepticism. We can neither believe our own eyes and ears, nor give credit to the testimony of others. But a doctrine which leads to scepticism must be false. A doctrine cannot be true which contradicts the evidence of sense, any more than a doctrine which contradicts the dictates of reason. Both are from God as well as revelation; by both God speaks to us; and what is contrary to their testimony in their proper sphere, cannot come from Him who is never at variance with himself.

For this imposition upon our senses, the Church of Rome accounts in the following manner: "Since it is the most horrid thing in the world to the nature of men," says the catechism of the council of Trent, "to be fed with man's flesh, or to drink his blood, God has most wisely ordered, that his most holy body and blood should be administered to us under the species of those things, bread and wine, by whose common and daily use and nourishment we are mostly delighted. And there are adjoined these two conveniences, whereof the first is, that we are freed from the reproach of infidels, which we could not easily have avoided, if we should be seen to eat our Lord under his own species. The other is, that while we thus take the body and blood of the Lord, in such a manner, that notwithstanding what is truly done cannot be perceived by the senses, this avails very much to increase faith in our souls."* The amount of this reasoning is, that transubstantiation is a miracle which God has found it expedient to conceal, lest Christians should be disgusted, and infidels should laugh: although it is not easy to see how its concealment can hinder the ridicule of infidels, as they are solemnly assured by the infallible church, that this shocking transmutation does actually take place, and that flesh and blood are really swallowed under a different form.

It was impossible that a doctrine so contrary to Scripture, to reason, and to our senses, should have been adopted but by slow degrees, and in an age of gross ignorance and superstition. It is astonishing that it should be retained amidst the increase of knowledge which distinguishes modern times, and after its impiety and absurdity have been so successfully exposed; and that not only should it obtain credit among the vulgar of the church of Rome, but men of genius and learning should be implicit believers of it. Where can we find a stronger proof of the power of prejudice in binding the mind, than when we observe such a man as Pascal, not to mention many others, adopting and defending an opinion, the absurdity of which he would, in different circumstances, have been the first to perceive, and to expose with unrivalled eloquence. "We should go out of the state in which we are," he says in his Lettres Provinciales,* "which is a state of faith, and is opposed by Paul as much to the law as to clear vision, if we possessed only the figures without Jesus Christ, because it is the property of the law to have only the shadow, and not the substance of things; and we should go out of it also, if we possessed him visibly, because faith, as the same Apostle says, is not of things which are seen. Thus the Eucharist is perfectly proportioned to our state of faith, because it truly includes Jesus Christ, but under a veil; so that this state would be destroyed, if Jesus Christ were not really under the species of bread and wine, as heretics pretend; and it would be also destroyed if we received him openly as in heaven, since this would confound our state with the state of the Jews, or with that of glory. This is the reason of this divine mystery. This makes us abhor the Calvinists as reducing us to the condition of the Jews, and aspire to the glory of the blessed, which will give us the full and eternal enjoyment of Jesus Christ. Hence we see that there are many differences between the manner in which he is communicated to Christians and to the blessed, and that among others, he is received here by the mouth, and not so in heaven; but that all the differences depend solely upon the difference between the state of faith in which we are, and the state of clear vision in which they are."

Whatever ingenuity may be displayed in this passage, it is liable to this objection, that it assumes the doctrine of transubstantiation to be true, and then proceeds to prove its truth by a mistaken view of its adaptation to the present condition of the church. The argument entirely fails. The difference between us and the Jews does not consist in our having Christ really and corporeally under the veil, while they had the figure without the substance: but in the fulfilment of the types in the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ, by which the full enjoyment of all spiritual blessings has been obtained. The superior excellence of the Christian dispensation does not arise from the bodily presence of the Saviour, but from the clear revelation of him in the gospel, and the abundant communication of grace, in consequence of his ascension into heaven. Any person who reads the Scriptures without prejudice will perceive, that these are expressly mentioned as the privileges of the present church, while there is not a single hint concerning such a presence of Christ as Papists imagine. When the Apostle Paul represents him as a High Priest of good things to come, or in whom the figures of the law have been realized, he, at the same time, describes him as a High Priest who has passed into the heavens. It is equally a mistake to suppose the dif-

* Pars ii, *de Euch. Sac.* § 46.

* Let. xvi.

ference between the militant and the triumphant church to be, that although both are favoured with his bodily presence, he is veiled from the saints on earth, but manifested to the saints in heaven. This statement is directly opposed to that of Paul, who expressly affirms this to be the difference, that on earth we are absent from the Lord, and in heaven we shall be present with him. "Knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."* This single passage overthrows the idea, that in the Eucharist he is present with us but under a veil.

Transubstantiation is not only contrary to Scripture, and reason, and common sense, but it leads and has led to other dangerous errors. A view of these will tend more fully to expose the doctrine, and to show that it is not a harmless absurdity. It has polluted the Church of Rome with idolatry, obscured the glory of the sacrifice of Christ, and given rise to the audacious mutilation of the sacred institution of the supper. These consequences will be considered in the next lecture.

LECTURE XCI.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Errors Consequent on Transubstantiation; Idolatry; Sacrifice of the Mass; Mutilation of the Sacrament.—Lutheran Doctrine of Consubstantiation.—Objections to it.—Doctrine of Zuinglius Respecting this Rite, and of Calvin.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION is not a speculative opinion, which, although erroneous in itself, leads to no practical consequences of an objectionable nature. While there is sufficient reason to reject it for its contrariety to Scripture, and reason, and common sense, it will appear worthy of reprobation to every person who considers the other dangerous errors to which it has given rise.

The first which I shall point out to you, is the idolatry which is founded on the doctrine of transubstantiation. When the priest has changed the bread into the body of Christ, by pronouncing the words, "*Hoc est corpus meum*,"† he adores it with bended knee, and rising, elevates it, that it may be seen and adored by the people. The same forms are observed after he has consecrated the wine. Such is the order of procedure in the Roman missal; and it is founded upon the doctrine of the church as declared by the Council of Trent. "There is no room for doubt, that all believers in Christ, according to the custom always received in the catholic church, should offer to this most holy sacrament the worship of Latria, which is due to the true God, for it is not to be the less adored, because it was instituted by Christ our Lord to be taken. For we believe that the same God is present in it, whom the eternal Father, introducing into the world, says, "Let all the angels of God worship him." This declaration is supported by the following canon. "If any man shall say, that in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is not to be adored, even with the external worship of Latria; and therefore that it is not to be venerated by a peculiar festival, nor carried about in processions, according to the laudable rite and custom of the universal church, nor to be publicly exhibited to the people that it may be adored, and that those who worship it are idolaters; let him be accursed."‡

Notwithstanding this dreadful denunciation, we do not hesitate to affirm that the worship of the elements is idolatry. One argument might suffice to establish this charge, namely, that we have proved that there is no such thing as transubstantiation, to the satisfaction of every person whom God has not given up to strong delusion to believe a lie. If our former reasonings are conclusive, the elements are simple bread and wine; and those who worship them are as gross idolaters as the heathens, who adored a naked sword or a shapeless stone. It may be thought that, although Christ should not be present in the elements, yet, as they suppose him to be present, and direct their worship to him, their mistake will excuse them. But it is not our intention, it is the law of God which is the rule of our conduct; and to suppose our intention to be a valid apology for our transgression of it, is to set aside the authority of the law, and make man a law to himself. In no part of Scripture are we commanded to worship the elements; nor are we commanded to worship God in every thing, or in any thing in which he is present. We are to worship himself, but not the objects around us, under the pretext that we worship God himself, who is in them. It may be said that there is a difference in the present case, because what we see is Christ himself in his body, and blood, and Divinity. But, granting that it is Christ, we may still question whether, as he does not manifest himself to us, we are authorized to worship him here, any more than in the sun, in which we are certain that his Divinity, the proper object of worship, is as truly present as in the sacrament. Besides, the Church of Rome commands us to worship the "sacrament," which undoubtedly signifies not only Christ corporeally present, but the species which remain. Now, if the accidents can subsist by themselves, as they suppose that they do, they are created things, however shadowy; and he, therefore, who adores the whole sacrament, worships them together with Christ, or the creature together with the Creator; the veil, as well as the thing veiled; the dress, as well as the person who wears it; and how can he escape the charge of idolatry? Although the doctrine of transubstantiation were true, no Papist can be certain that Christ is in the sacrament; and consequently, upon his own principles, he may be guilty of idolatry every time that he partakes of it. If the intention of the priest is wanting, the elements remain simple bread and wine. But this is not the only ground of apprehension. "If the bread is not of wheat," says the Roman missal, "or if, being of wheat, it is mixed of grain of another kind, in such quantity that it is not wheaten bread, or is otherwise corrupted, the sacrament is not effected. If it is made of rose water, or of any other distillation, it is doubtful whether it is effected." Again. "If the wine is turned into vinegar, or is wholly putrid, or is made of sour or unripe grapes, or is mixed with so much water that the wine is corrupted, the sacrament is not effected." Once more, "If any man shall diminish, or change any thing in the form of consecration, and by the change of the words, the words have not the same signification, the sacrament will not be effected."* This mighty miracle, it seems, depends upon many pre-requisites, the omission of which will completely prevent it. Here, as in the incantation of magic, unless the *ipsissima verba*† are repeated, the expected effect will not follow. It appears, too, that there are some substances which cannot be converted into the body and blood of our Saviour, as, sour wine, and bread made of barley or oats; but how they happen to be so stubborn as to retain their nature, in spite of all the power of the priest, we must leave to the abettors of this mystery to explain. It is evident that, ac-

* 2 Cor. v. 6, 8. † This is my body.
‡ Sessio xiii. *de Euch.* cap. v. et can. 6.

* *De Defect. circa Missam occurrentibus*, iii, iv, et v.
† The very words.

cording to their own ideas, they are in constant danger of idolatry. It is their concern to extricate themselves as they can.

The second error founded on transubstantiation, is the notion that the Eucharist is a true and proper sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead, or the souls in purgatory; Christ who is corporeally present, is not only given to the communicants, but is offered to God as a propitiation for them. The Council of Trent expressly affirms that this sacrament is a sacrifice by which God is appeased, and that its benefit extends not only to men upon earth, but to the departed saints who are not yet fully purified; and in the usual manner anathematizes every man who shall dare to controvert its decision. "If any man shall say that, in the mass, a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God;" or shall say, "that in these words, 'This do in remembrance of me,' Christ did not constitute the Apostles priests, or did not ordain that they and other priests should offer his body and blood;" or shall say, "that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, or a naked commemoration of the sacrifice made upon the cross, but not propitiatory: let him be accursed."* The subject is farther explained in the catechism which was published by order of the council. "The Eucharist was instituted, that the church might have a perpetual sacrifice, whereby our sins might be expiated, and our heavenly Father, who has oftentimes been grievously offended by our wickedness, might be turned from his anger to mercy, and from the severity of his just revenge to pity. We may observe the figure and resemblance of this thing in the paschal lamb, which was used to be offered as a sacrifice, and eaten as a sacrament by the children of Israel."†

The great argument for the sacrifice of the mass, is apostolical tradition, by which they mean any thing which was said or done by some dreaming dotard or superstitious fool in remote ages, and which other dotards and fools were pleased to admire, and to retain as wise and good. But as, notwithstanding the high authority which they ascribe to tradition, they are well pleased when they can find any appearance of support from Scripture, they have drawn from it some new arguments to confirm the faithful, and to confound heretics. Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine to Abraham, when he was returning from the slaughter of the kings. This is a very simple fact, which it might be supposed, has no relation to the subject before us; but, if we lack ingenuity, Papists have it in perfection, and have discovered in this transaction the whole mystery of the sacrifice of the Eucharist.‡ How they know, we cannot tell; but Melchizedek, it seems, offered the bread and wine to God, before he presented them to Abraham. Now, Melchizedek was a priest, and Christ is a priest after his order; and therefore he must have instituted an unbloody sacrifice, under the species of bread and wine. Some of us, perhaps, do not perceive the connexion between the premises and the conclusion; but this is owing to our blindness. If we had lived in the days of the power and triumph of antichrist, the inquisition would have opened our eyes. To be serious, it is plain, beyond all reasonable dispute, that, although Melchizedek was a priest, and in this character blessed Abraham, his giving him bread and wine was a mere act of hospitality.—Again, it is said, in the prophecies of Malachi, "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering."‖ Now, what can this pure offering be but the sacrifice of the mass, which is presented to God on a thousand altars, in the east and in the west? But, if these blundering interpreters, who seem totally incapable of distinguishing when a passage should be understood literally, and when figuratively, would adhere uniformly to their plan, they would maintain that the whole Mosaic ritual should be revived; for the worship of the Gentiles in the times of the gospel, is described in language borrowed from it, and they are represented as bringing their burnt offerings and sacrifices to the sanctuary.* If, in such passages, the literal sense is rejected by all, what reason can be given for retaining it on this occasion? Why should we suppose that the "pure offering" of Malachi is a real sacrifice any more than the "burnt-offerings" of Isaiah? Why should we not admit that, in the one case as well as in the other, there is only a metaphorical application of the religious terms of the Old Testament to the New, and that the peace-offering and the incense are the holy sacrifices of prayer and praise? This is beyond all question the meaning; and the Church of Rome is driven to the most wretched shifts, when it seeks support from a solitary passage, which the laws of sound criticism require to be explained in conformity to other similar passages.—A third argument is founded on the declaration, that Christ is "a priest forever;"† which they cannot conceive to be true, unless he continue to offer sacrifice for sin. And here they give a curious account of the mass, making it, although we should naturally suppose it to be a new sacrifice, in fact the very sacrifice which was offered upon the cross; and, at the same time, that, while they say that this sacrifice is offered by their priests, they may not seem to destroy the perpetuity of his priesthood by giving him successors in office, they identify the priests of the Romish Church with the High Priest of our profession. "We acknowledge it to be, and it ought to be accounted, but one and the same sacrifice, which is done in the mass, and was offered on the cross." "There is one and the same priest, Christ the Lord: for the ministers who make this sacrifice, sustain not their own but the person of Christ, when they consecrate his body and blood, as is evident from the words of consecration; for the priest says not, 'This is Christ's body,' but, 'This is my body:' bearing the person of Christ our Lord, he changes the substance of the bread and wine into the true substance of his body and blood."‡ But this is a mere shift; for, as the ministers of antichrist are supposed to be real priests, and to offer a real sacrifice, although they represent Christ, and act in his name, they are unquestionably as much distinct priests as were the successors of Aaron; and if it should be said that there is only one priesthood, namely, that of Christ, which they as his ministers exercise, the same thing might be said of the Levitical priesthood, which was one, although its functions were performed by many individuals. According to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, Christ has successors in office, and therefore is not a Priest forever, in the sense of the Scriptures, which compare him to Melchizedek, because no person comes after him. Thus the argument which they advance to support the sacrifice of the mass, condemns it, since the priesthood of Christ is not perpetual if its functions are committed to other hands.

It is an astonishing blunder to suppose that the perpetuity of his priesthood requires the uninterrupted repetition of his sacrifice. Is sacrificing the only duty of a priest? Is not intercession an essential part of his office? And if our Lord Jesus Christ offered a sacrifice once, which fully accomplished its design by appeasing Divine justice, and obtaining eternal redemption, and has gone into the celestial sanctuary to

* Sess. xxii. *de Sacrif. Missae*, can. 1, 2, & 3.
† Pars ii. *de Euch. Sac.* § 75.
‡ Cat. Trid. Pars ii. *de Euch. Sac.* § 80. ‖ Mal. i. 11.

* Is. lvi. 7. † Heb. vii. 21.
‡ Cat. Trid. Pars ii. *De Euch. Sac.* § 81, 82.

intercede for his people upon earth, is it not true that he is made a priest, "after the power of an endless life?"* Why should his sacrifice be repeated? Was there any defect in the first oblation, which is supplied by the ministrations of the priests of Rome? The sacrifice of the mass is derogatory to our Saviour in the character of our High Priest, and is directly opposed to the reasoning of Paul on this subject, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. His manifest design is to demonstrate the superiority of Christ to the Priests of the law in every respect, and particularly in this, that they offered many sacrifices, but he offered only one, which does not need to be repeated: "He offered himself once." "By one offering he has forever perfected them that are sanctified;" and "having, by himself, purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."†

The third error arising from transubstantiation, is the mutilation of the sacrament, by the withholding of the cup from the laity. Hear the Council of Trent! "The holy synod, taught by the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and piety, and following the judgment and practice of the church, declares and teaches, that the laity, and the clergy when not officiating, are not bound, by any Divine precept, to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist under both kinds." It goes on to state, that the church has authority to make such changes in the dispensation of the sacraments as shall be found expedient. "Wherefore," it is added, "the holy mother, the church, acknowledging this her authority in the administration of the sacraments, although from the beginning of the Christian religion, the use of both kinds was not unfrequent, being induced by weighty and just causes, in consequence of the extensive change of practice in the progress of time, has approved this practice of communicating under one kind, and decreed that it should be a law:" "And farther declares, that, although our Redeemer, in the last supper, instituted this sacrament in two kinds, and so delivered it to the Apostles, yet under one kind only, whole and entire Christ, and the true sacrament, are taken; and that, therefore, those who receive only one kind, are deprived of no grace necessary to salvation."‡ It is worthy of particular attention, that the Council does not plead, on this occasion, either Scripture or Apostolical tradition; that it acknowledges both kinds, the bread and the wine, to have been instituted by Christ, and the ordinance to have been thus celebrated in the primitive times; and yet, that it has the effrontery to declare, that one kind constitutes a perfect sacrament, and that thus only it should be observed. In all the proceedings of the apostate church, there is not an instance of more undisguised and avowed opposition to the authority of Christ. It might have gone on with no greater impiety to abolish baptism, or the Sabbath, or any other ordinance. Yet, without pretending any authority but that of "the church," the holy synod, as it calls itself, pronounces a curse upon every man who shall affirm, that, by the command of God, both kinds should be received; that the Holy Catholic Church has not sufficient reasons for denying the cup to the laity; and that whole and entire Christ is not received under the species of bread alone.‖

You will be curious to know what are the weighty reasons by which the church has been induced to make this essential change in the original institution. You shall hear them. "First, Great care was to be taken lest the blood of our Lord should be spilt upon the ground, and this did not seem easy to be avoided if it should be administered among a great multitude of people. Secondly, Since the sacred Eucharist ought to be in readiness for the sick, it was much to be feared that, if the species of wine were to be kept somewhat longer, it might become sour." The catechism of Pope Pius, from which these reasons are extracted, does not tell us what would be the consequence; but as, if the wine is sour at first, it is not changed into the blood of Christ by the words of consecration, the danger to be apprehended probably is, that, if the species, that is, the accidents, should become sour, the blood would be turned again into wine. "Thirdly, There are very many who can by no means endure the taste, nor so much, indeed, as the very smell of wine. Fourthly, Wherefore, lest that which was given for the sake of spiritual health might hurt the health of the body, it was very wisely established by the church that the faithful should receive only the species of bread. Fifthly, This may be added to the other reasons, that in very many countries they have a very great scarcity of wine, nor can they procure it from other places, but with great charges, and with tedious and difficult journeys. Lastly, What is most of all to the purpose, the heresy of those was to be rooted up who denied, that whole Christ is in each species, and asserted that the body only, without the blood, is contained in the species of bread, and that the blood was contained under that of wine. Now, therefore, that the truth of the Catholic faith might be more evidently placed before our eyes, the communion of one species, that is, of bread, was wisely introduced."*

This last reason is founded on the doctrine of *concomitance*. This term is used by the Popish Church to signify that whole Christ is present under either of the species.† Although the bread is said to be changed into his body, and the wine into his blood, yet his body and blood are not to be considered as in a state of separation. Wherever his body is, there is his blood; and wherever his blood is, there is his body. Both are present under each of the species; and if you divide the species of bread into particles, and the wine into drops, Christ is in every one of them, in his body, soul, and Divinity, as much as in the whole bread and the whole wine. Hence you perceive how the denial of the cup to the laity has originated in transubstantiation. It was first supposed that he was corporeally present in the Eucharist; and then it followed, as Christ cannot be divided, that whoever received one species, was as fully a partaker of him as if he had received both species. The cup was superfluous; nothing was lost by its being withheld. By the same reasoning it might have been given to the laity, and the bread been denied.

As the Church of Rome believes the doctrine of concomitance to be true, it should have the same effect in relation to the priests as to the people; and as the priests receive a whole Christ under the species of bread, there is no good reason why the cup should be given to them any more than to others. It was necessary, however, to make a distinction between them and the laity, and to secure that profound veneration for their persons as sacred, which it is the great object of the whole system to maintain. But the doctrine of concomitance is false, because its foundation is false. There is a peculiar absurdity in it; for the Church of Rome exhibits separately the signs of the body and blood of Christ, and at the same time assures us that they are not separate but conjoined. For what purpose were separate symbols instituted, if the things which they signify are blended together, or the one is included in the other? Whatever papists may affirm,

* Heb. vii. 16. † Ib. vii. 29. x. 44. i. 3.
‡ Sessio. xxi. *de Com. sub utraq. spec.* cap. 1, 2, 3.
‖ Ib. can. 1, 2, 3.

* Cat. Con. Trid. Pars ii. *de Euch. Sac.* § 70.
† Ib. § 33.

as the Lord's Supper is a memorial of his death, he is represented in it as dead, and his blood as poured out from his body as an atonement for sin. They exist separately in the signs, and are given separately to the communicants. To affirm, therefore, that they are concomitant, or that either of the symbols comprehends both, is to destroy the meaning, and to defeat the design of the institution. As they do not plead Scripture or apostolical tradition for taking away the cup from the people, there is no occasion to bring forward arguments in refutation of their practice. They are self-condemned; they acknowledge that the word of God, and the primitive church, are against them. We are fully warranted to affirm, that the Eucharist, as administered by them, is no sacrament, an essential part being wanting. The command to drink the wine is as express as the command to eat the bread; and with respect to the former, our Saviour has been more explicit, as he foresaw the daring impiety of the followers of Antichrist. Of the bread, he simply said, according to Matthew's account, "Take, eat;" but when he gave the cup, he said "drink ye all of it."*

I proceed to lay before you the opinions of Protestants respecting the Lord's Supper: and I shall begin with that of the Lutheran Church.

Although Luther perceived the absurdity of transubstantiation, and renounced it, yet the literal interpretation of our Saviour's words, to which he had so long been accustomed, retained a firm hold of his mind, and led him to adopt an opinion equally unintelligible and unscriptural. He believed, that although the bread and wine are not changed into the body and blood of Christ, yet that his real body and blood are received by the communicants along with the symbols. This is called *consubstantiation*, to signify that the substance of the body and blood of Christ is present in, with, or under the substance of the elements; and sometimes *impanation*, a word which imports that he is in the bread. Papists say that the substance of the elements is annihilated, and only the accidents remain; Lutherans affirm that they retain their proper nature, and that the human nature of Christ is mysteriously conjoined with them. Luther indeed pretended to give an explanation of his doctrine by saying, that as fire and iron are united, so the body of Christ is joined to the bread in the Eucharist. His followers, however, acknowledge that it is a mystery which we cannot comprehend, but which we are bound to believe on the authority of Scripture, and however incredible this union may seem to us, the almighty power of God is able to effect it.

Luther supported his doctrine by this argument, that Christ is at the right hand of God, and the right hand of God is everywhere; but he afterwards abandoned it, and with good reason. The right hand of God does not signify his power, which is omnipresent as his essence is, but the highest glory and authority. It is a figurative expression, which when interpreted according to the laws of sound criticism, appears not to have the most remote connexion with the subject in question; for by no species of reasoning does it follow, that the human nature of our Saviour is omnipresent, because it is exalted above all principalities and powers. If the "right hand of God" has any relation to place, it is in the higher regions of the universe; and Christ "sitting at it," overthrows the doctrine of consubstantiation, for God is said to have "set him at his right hand in the heavenly places."† The argument was revived by some of the followers of Luther, who maintained the ubiquity of the human nature of Christ, and accounted for it by the power of God, which they alleged, could render it omnipresent; or by the personal union between it and his divine nature, in consequence of which the properties of the latter were communicated to the former. An appeal to the power of God overawes the mind, and there is an appearance of presumption and impiety in calling in question the possibility of any thing which is said to be done by it. But as it is no limitation of the divine omniscience, that it does not know what is unknowable, so it is no limitation of omnipotence, to say that it cannot perform what is impossible. God cannot make a circle square, because it would then cease to be a circle; or a rod straight and crooked at the same time, because the thing implies a contradiction. In like manner, he cannot make the body of Christ omnipresent, because place or locality is an attribute of body, and to ascribe omnipresence to it is to destroy its essence. Lutherans indeed have assigned a double presence to it, the one circumscribed and local, and the other celestial, supernatural, and divine. But this is an arbitrary distinction contrived to support their hypothesis, and besides it destroys itself; for if the human nature of Christ have a local presence, it cannot also have ubiquity; and if it have ubiquity, it cannot at the same time be confined to a place. The communication of the properties of the divine to the human nature is inconceivable, and would not have been admitted, but as an expedient to extricate them from a difficulty. The doctrine of the church in all ages,—and it is agreeable to Scripture,—has been that the two natures of Christ, although hypostatically united, continue distinct; that each retains its peculiar attributes; that omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, although predicated of the person, belong to him only as God; and that the sole effect of the union with respect to the human nature, is to enhance the value of its actions, which are truly the actions of the only-begotten of the Father. To suppose that divine properties are communicated to the human nature, is to confound the Creator with the creature; and it may be confidently affirmed to be impossible even for omnipotence to make that infinite which is finite.

Consubstantiation is liable to many of the same objections which may be advanced against transubstantiation. It supposes the body of Christ to be at the same time in heaven and on earth, in Europe and in America; it supposes it to be in a state of glory, and in a state of humiliation; it supposes it to be present, and yet to be imperceptible to any of our senses, and therefore to be present after the manner of a spirit; it supposes it to be taken into the mouths of the communicants, and chewed, and swallowed, and digested; it supposes that at the last supper, Christ sat at table with his disciples, and was at the same time in the bread; that he held himself in his hand, and then transferred himself from his own hand into the hands of his Apostles; and that while they saw him at some distance from them, he was in their mouths. How strong is the power of prejudice, which can make any man believe, or imagine that he believes such absurdities! After this, there is nothing so monstrous, and incredible which he might not be prevailed upon to acknowledge, if he were first persuaded that it is taught in the Scriptures.

That consubstantiation is not taught in the Scriptures, might be proved by all the arguments which have been adduced to show, that the literal interpretation of the words, "This is my body," "This is my blood," is false. These it is unnecessary to go over again, as they were so lately laid before you. It deserves attention, that the interpretation of the Lutheran church is more forced and unnatural than that of the Romish church. The Papist, suspecting no figure in the case, with childish simplicity takes the words as they stand, "this bread is my body," and believes that the one is miraculously changed into the other. The

* Matth. xxvi. 27. † Eph. i. 20.

Lutheran employs some thought, and exercises a little ingenuity, and finds that the words signify, not "This bread is my body," but "This bread contains my body." By what law does he deviate from the strict interpretation? Where does he find, that the verb of existence, *is*, signifies *in*, *with*, or *under*? Not in any of the canons of criticism, but in the necessity of his system, which cannot be supported without this explanation. Hence it is evident, that the Papist has the advantage of the Lutheran; and that, if the words are to be literally understood, they favour transubstantiation, and consubstantiation is founded on a perversion of them. Both doctrines are contrary to Scripture, as well as to reason and common sense; but that of Lutherans offers more direct violence to the words of inspiration.

However objectionable consubstantiation may be, it is, when compared with the favourite dogma of Papists, a harmless absurdity, as it is not clogged with the impious consequences which are deduced from transubstantiation. Although Lutherans believe the corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament, they condemn the worship of it as idolatrous; they do not maintain the sacrifice of the mass, nor withhold the cup from the laity. It is an opinion which has no influence upon their practice, and does not lead them into error respecting other doctrines of religion. On this account, it has been regarded by the Reformed churches with less displeasure than the Popish tenet, and has been considered by many as not constituting an insurmountable obstacle to the communion between them.

The opinion of Zuinglius comes next to be considered. Although he does not hold so distinguished a place as Luther in the history of the Protestant churches, yet it is certain that he preceded him in openly opposing the errors and corruptions of the Church of Rome, made earlier and more rapid progress in the knowledge of the truth, and entertained far more enlightened views on the subject of the Eucharist than the German Reformer. He began to preach the gospel, as we are informed by himself, the year before Luther first delaimed against indulgences, and while the name of the latter was unknown in Switzerland. "He saw," as Melchior Adam relates in his life, "the error of transubstantiation, or of the substantial conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, the accidents only remaining; he saw that the dogma of consubstantiation, or impanation, that is, of the corporeal presence of Christ in the bread and wine, their substance remaining, which Luther embraced, agreed neither with the words of our Lord, nor with the analogy of Christian faith, nor with the consent of orthodox antiquity; for he saw that it had not been said by Christ, 'Let this be or become my body,' nor even, 'Under this, or in this, my body is, or is contained.' Yet he did not see what he should safely adopt, till having weighed many similar passages of Scripture, and consulted orthodox antiquity, as Tertullian, Ambrose, Augustine, Theodoret, Bertram, and others, he at length determined, that in the words of our Lord, 'This is my body,' or, 'This bread is my body,' there is a metonymy peculiar to the Hebrew language, and that metonymically the name of the thing signified is transferred to the sign; that the bread is called the body of the Lord, and the wine the blood of the New Testament, because they are symbols of the body and blood of the Lord, or because they signify the body and blood of the Lord sacramentally. Before he published this opinion, he not only communicated it to his faithful friends, but took care that it should be made known to all persons in Germany and France who were distinguished for learning and authority; for he foresaw that the opposite opinion, which for so many ages had taken deep root in the minds of men, would with great difficulty be eradicated."* The opinion which he finally adopted was this,—"That the bread and wine were no more than a representation of the body and blood of Christ; or, in other words, the signs appointed to denote the benefits that were conferred upon mankind in consequence of the death of Christ; that, therefore, Christians derived no other fruit from the participation of the Lord's Supper, than a mere commemoration and remembrance of the merits of Christ, and that there was nothing in the ordinance but a memorial of Christ."

That both Papists and Lutherans should have exclaimed against this simple view of the sacred institution, can excite no surprise. To some who had renounced the errors of both, he appeared to have gone to the opposite extreme. Those, therefore, who did not choose to condemn his opinion in express terms, deemed it necessary to make an apology for it. Thus Bucer, his contemporary, having remarked that in the epistles of Zuinglius concerning the sacraments, some things are found, from which it may be inferred that he did not attribute as much to the sacraments as ought to be ascribed to them, admonishes the reader that Zuinglius did not deny that the sacraments are symbols of grace, and in their own way are auxiliary to faith; and goes on to state, that his object in speaking of them as he did, was to guard men against putting confidence in the external work, not to evacuate the sacraments of Christ. "For he had to do with those who defended the vulgar impiety by which some men are led to seek salvation from the *opus operatum*, as they call it, that is, *from the ceremony itself externally performed*, being altogether careless of faith in the promises. Against these he justly contended, that Christ our Lord restores us to the favour of his Father; and not the sacraments, or the external action of the priests in the administration of the sacraments. Whatever therefore you shall read in these epistles which shall seem to detract something from the sacraments, understand all that to be said concerning the external action, to the exclusion of the Spirit of Christ."†

It had appeared to some that Zuinglius denied the efficacy of the sacraments, and reduced them to mere signs which work solely by a moral influence; and this apology was undertaken to show that this was not his intention. To have represented them as naked signs, would no doubt have been improper; because, if they were instituted for the confirmation of our faith, they could not have accomplished this design without the communication of grace; but there seems to have been a disposition in that age, to believe that there was a presence of Christ in the Eucharist different from his presence in the other ordinances of the gospel; an undefined something which corresponded to the strong language used at the institution of the Supper, "This is my body,—this is my blood." Acknowledging it to be figurative, many still thought that a mystery was couched under it. It was not, indeed, easy for those who had long been accustomed to the notion of the bodily presence of Christ, at once to simplify their ideas; and perhaps, too, they were induced to express themselves as they did, with a view to give less offence to the Lutherans. Whatever was their motive, their language is not always sufficiently guarded. Hence Bucer adds, "When it is said that Christ, having left this world and carried his body to heaven, cannot be consubstantiated with the bread, do not think that in our churches he is excluded from the sacred Supper, and that bread and wine alone are administered as empty symbols. As the passage of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven, implies only that he is not here after the

* Melch. Adami Vitæ Germ. Theol. *Vita Zuinglii*, p. 39, 40.
† Buceri Epist. in Melch. Adami Vita Zuinglii, p. 41, 42.

manner of this world; so we do not deny that he is united to the bread, or locally included in the bread; but not naturally, and after the manner of this world. We acknowledge that the true body and the true blood of Christ, true Christ himself, God and man, is present to us in the Supper; that by the words and symbols he is exhibited not for the perishing food of the flesh, but for the eternal food of the soul, and on that account is not perceived by sense and reason, but by true faith."*

These words are very unguarded. While they deny, they seem also to affirm, the real presence of Christ in the sacrament in some mysterious manner, and are calculated to mislead and to confound the mind. Had it been said that the bread and wine are merely signs of his body and blood, but that he is contemplated and enjoyed by the communicants in the exercises of meditation and faith, we could have understood it; but what idea can we affix to the presence of the true body and the true blood of Christ, "not naturally, and after the manner of this world?" Would not Papists and Lutherans say the same thing?

The name of Calvin ought always to be mentioned with respect. He was one of the brightest ornaments of the Reformation, and in learning, genius, and zeal, had few equals, and no superior. His opposition both to transubstantiation and to consubstantiation, is well known; and yet, in speaking of the Lord's Supper, he has expressed himself in the following manner: "The sum is, that our souls are not otherwise fed with the flesh and blood of Christ, than bread and wine sustain our corporeal life. Nor would the analogy of the sign otherwise agree, unless souls found their nourishment in Christ; which cannot be unless Christ truly coalesce with us into one, and restore us by the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood. But although it seems incredible that, the places being so distant, the flesh of Christ should penetrate to us so as to be our food, let us remember how much the secret power of the Spirit exceeds our senses, and how foolish it is to attempt to measure his immensity by our standard. What our mind does not comprehend, let faith conceive, that the Spirit truly unites things which are disjointed in place. That sacred communication of his flesh and blood, by which Christ transfuses his life into us, no otherwise than if he penetrated into our bones and marrow, he attests and seals in the supper; not indeed in a vain and empty sign, but there exerting the efficacy of his Spirit, by which he fulfils what he promises."†

I confess that I do not understand this passage. It supposes a communion of believers in the human nature of our Saviour in the Eucharist; and endeavours to remove the objections arising from the distance of place, by a reference to the almighty power of the Spirit, much in the same way as Papists and Lutherans solve the difficulty attending their respective systems. If Calvin had meant only that, in the Sacred Supper, believers have fellowship with Christ in his death, he would have asserted an important truth, attested by the experience of the people of God in every age; but why did he obscure it, and destroy its simplicity, by involving it in ambiguous language? If he had any thing different in view; if he meant that there is some mysterious communication with his human nature, we must be permitted to say that the notion was as incomprehensible to himself as it is to his readers. The error into which he and others have fallen is this, that while they acknowledge the words of institution to be figurative, they speak of them occasionally in such terms as import the literal sense; not attending to this obvious canon of interpretation, that, in explaining a figure, we should give the true sense in other terms, and uniformly adhere to it; and that to mix together the figure and the literal sense, sometimes bringing forward the one and sometimes the other, creates confusion in the minds of others, and, instead of illustrating the subject, involves it in obscurity.

* Buceri Epist. ubi supra.
† Calvini Instit. lib. iv. cap. xvii. sect. 10.

LECTURE XCII.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

True Nature of the Eucharist.—In what Manner Christ is Present in It.—Observations on the Time of Institution; The Symbols; The Mode of Administration.—What is Implied in Partaking of it.—Who may Partake.—Periods of Celebrating it.

We have reviewed the opinions of different denominations of Christians concerning the Lord's Supper, and have seen that even some of those who denied the real presence, have not always expressed themselves with sufficient clearness and simplicity. The words of institution have impressed them with an idea, that, although there is no change of the elements, and the true body and blood of our Redeemer are not contained in them, yet something mysterious is implied. This charge, at least, may be fairly advanced against those whom we find, even although they profess to explain the subject, making use of figurative language. It is true that, since our Lord calls the bread and wine his body and blood, we may be said to eat his body when we eat the bread, and to drink his blood when we drink the wine; but then it should be considered, that we can only eat the one and drink the other, in the same sense in which the former is called his body, and the latter his blood, that is, figuratively. Stript of all metaphorical terms, the action must mean that, in the believing and grateful commemoration of his death, we enjoy the blessings which were purchased by it, in the same manner in which we enjoy them when we exercise faith in hearing the Gospel. Why, then, should any man talk, as Calvin does, of some inexplicable communion in this ordinance with the human nature of Christ; and tell us that, although it seems impossible, on account of the distance to which he is removed from us, we are not to measure the power of the Divine Spirit by our standard? I am sure that the person who speaks so, conveys no idea into the minds of those whom he addresses; and I am equally certain that he does not understand himself. When our Lord speaks, in the Gospel of John, of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, all Protestants will acknowledge that he simply means our reception of him and his benefits by faith. Why should it be supposed that any other thing is signified by the Lord's Supper, in which the language is virtually the same? What rule of interpretation will justify us in entertaining the idea of something more mysterious in the one case than in the other? There is an absurdity in the notion, that there is any communion with the body and blood of Christ, considered in themselves; that he intended any such thing; or that it would be of any advantage to us. There is an absurdity in imagining that, by calling the symbols his body and blood, he meant to fix our attention upon these, materially considered; and in not acknowledging that his design was to direct our thoughts to himself, as our incarnate Redeemer, who was substituted in our room, expiated our sins, and has obtained a perfect salvation for us. The ordinance is misunderstood, when it gives rise to carnal meditations; and is then only observed aright, when our minds are employed in the spiritual contemplation of his atonement, and its effects. When our Church-

therefore, says that "the body and blood are as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses,"* and, that they "feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace,"† it can mean only, that our incarnate suffering Saviour is apprehended by their minds, through the instituted signs; and that by faith they enjoy peace and hope; or it means something unintelligible and unscriptural. Plain, literal language is best, especially on spiritual subjects, and should have been employed by Protestant Churches with the utmost care, as the figurative terms of Scripture have been so grossly mistaken. On this ground, I object to the following words in the Confession of Faith of the Reformed Churches of France: "We confess that, in the Holy Supper, Jesus Christ feeds and nourishes us truly with his flesh and blood, that we may be one with him, and that his life may be communicated to us. For, although he is in heaven till he come to judge the world, yet we believe that, by the secret and incomprehensible virtue of his Spirit, he nourishes and quickens us with the substance of his body and blood. We hold that this is done spiritually, not to put imaginations and thoughts in the place of the effect and the truth, but inasmuch as this mystery surmounts, by its height, the measure of our senses, and the whole order of nature."‡

It is not the design of these observations to deny, or call in question, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. I should not hesitate to affirm a real, in opposition to an imaginary, and in distinction from a symbolical, presence, had not the phrase been abused to express a doctrine inconsistent with Scripture and common sense. But the doctrine of his presence I would not found, as others do, upon the words of institution, which, when justly interpreted, merely import that the elements are signs of his body and blood. Now, a sign is very far from implying that the thing signified is present. It is rather understood to represent an absent object, and is put in its place to remind us of it, because it is removed to a distance from us. Instead of being a fair conclusion from the words of institution, that there is a peculiar, mysterious presence of our Saviour, which can be accounted for only by the miraculous power of the Spirit, it might rather be inferred that he is not present at all, and that the design of the symbols is to call him to remembrance in his absence. The doctrine of his presence in the Sacred Supper, is legitimately deduced from his general promise, which relates to all his ordinances without any special respect to the Supper: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."‖ It is this promise which gives us ground to consider him as present in the Eucharist, in baptism, in prayer, in the preaching of the Gospel. In all these ordinances he is present; and he is present in the same manner in them all, namely, by his Spirit, who renders them effectual means of salvation. This sentiment would be pronounced heretical by the Church of Rome, and by the followers, of Luther; and would even incur the disapprobation of many Protestants, who have been accustomed to think that Christ is somehow in the Eucharist, as he is not in any other ordinance. But their belief and their confident affirmation are of no value, if they are not supported by Scripture. And where do they find any ground for their opinion but in human systems? It is indeed said, that "the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ, and the cup which we drink is the communion of his blood."§ No man who admits that the bread and wine are only signs and figures, can consistently suppose the words now quoted to have any other meaning, than that we have communion with Christ in the fruits of his sufferings and death; or that, receiving the symbols, we receive by faith the benefits procured by the pains of his body, and the effusion of his blood. If it should still be thought that the strong terms used by our Lord imply something peculiar to this ordinance, I would remind you that the same language is employed in reference to the Gospel; for our Saviour is speaking of it, and not of the Eucharist, when he says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."* Now, as the man who believes the Gospel, eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Christ, as well as he who partakes of the sacred Supper, it follows, that in both communion with him is of the same kind, and that there is no reason to imagine any presence of our Saviour in the Eucharist which is not in the word.

What has been now said, has no tendency to diminish our reverence for the Eucharist. It is no true respect for it, which is founded on a mistaken view of its nature. It is still a holy institution, in which believers enjoy intimate fellowship with Christ; and is guarded by an awful sanction, that none may dare to engage in the service unprepared: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."†

I shall now proceed to give you an account of the Lord's Supper.

The occasion on which it was instituted by Christ, was the celebration of the passover with his disciples. Having sent some of them to procure a place, and to make ready all things for the feast, "when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples," &c.‡ You will observe that it was during the time of the passover, while they were eating, and probably towards the end of the feast, that our Lord instituted the Eucharist. The one was not finished when the other commenced; and, by this continuity, it was intimated that the one was changed into the other, and that the latter was henceforth to supply the place of the former.

The time of the institution was the night on which he was betrayed. He was to be put to death the next day; and, in the view of that event, he appointed the Supper to be a perpetual memorial of it. The time was calculated to invest it with a particular interest, as his disciples would connect with the celebration of it the recollection of the awful scenes which immediately ensued. To his followers in every age, it is a proof of his singular love to them, that while his own dreadful sufferings were so near, he thought of them with the most tender regard, and provided for their encouragement and consolation amidst the evils of life. They are excited to remember him, by this testimony that he remembers them.

The symbols which he selected were bread and wine, of which the former represents his body, and the latter his blood. The bread and wine were such as had been placed on the table for the purpose of celebrating the passover. A dispute arose, in former times, between the Eastern and the Western Church, whether the bread should be leavened or unleavened. The Greeks maintain that it should be leavened, because our Lord, they think, ate the passover the day before it was eaten by the Jews, and consequently, before the use of unleavened bread had begun. On the other hand, the Latins affirm that he observed the passover at the usual time, and, of course, used unleavened bread, according to the law. This contro-

* Conf. ch. xxix. § 7. † Larger Cat. Q. 168.
‡ Art. xxxvi. Vide Quick's Synodicon, vol. i. p. 14.
‖ Matth. xviii. 20. § 1 Cor. x. 16.

* John vi. 53. † 1 Cor. xi. 29. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 20, 26.

versy contributed, with other causes, to the schism between the Churches, which has lasted for many centuries. It is in the highest degree insignificant, as the use of either the one kind or the other was purely accidental, and the quality of the bread has no connexion with the nature and design of the ordinance. The practice of dividing the bread into small pieces, called wafers, and putting them into the mouths of the communicants, is a corruption of the Church of Rome, which takes away the significant action of breaking the bread, and the emblem of the union and fellowship of Christians, expressed by their partaking of one bread, or one loaf, according to the words of the Apostle: "For we, being many, are one body, and one bread: for we are all partakers of that one bread."* With respect to the wine, it has been inquired, whether it should be mingled with water, or exhibited pure? We are told that the Jews were accustomed to mix water with their wine, and that they did so particularly at the passover; and it has been inferred that our Saviour complied with the custom of his country. There is little doubt that he would do so in a matter so indifferent; but we do not know what was the custom in his days, except from Jewish tradition, on which no dependence can be placed. This practice generally obtained in Christian churches, and, as is usual, mystical reasons were assigned for it; that the wine and water signified the blood and water which flowed from our Saviour's side; that they denoted the union of his two natures in one person; and that, as nations are called waters in the visions of the Apocalypse, the mixture was expressive of the union of believers to Christ. Such fancies are childish and contemptible. As nothing is said of any mixture in the Scriptures, it is natural to conclude that the wine should be pure. It has been farther inquired, whether in cases where bread and wine cannot be procured, it would be lawful to make use of corresponding substances? To us the question is a mere speculation, on which we are not called to decide; but, as necessity supersedes positive law, it would be hard to affirm that the Lord's Supper should not be celebrated, where the identical materials could not be found which were used at the original institution.

Our Lord took the bread, and after supper the cup. This has been supposed to be a significant action, and has been explained in different ways; some making it import, that God took his own Son to be mediator between him and us, and a propitiation for our sins; and others conceiving it to mean, that Christ assumed our nature to die in it. The other actions are understood from their own nature, or from the words of Scripture; but the meaning of this action is the subject only of conjecture, and hence there are different views of its import. In other words, it is explained according to every man's fancy. As the Scripture relates the fact, but subjoins no observation upon it, we are at liberty to reject human commentaries. I am disposed to think, that the taking of the bread and wine was not a sacramental action, but merely a preliminary step to the institution. Bread and wine were upon the table for the purpose of the passover, which Jesus, as Master of the family, had already sanctified by prayer and thanksgiving. It was necessary, as he was to commence a new feast, that he should take them again and distribute them, in order to show the disciples that this was a new feast, and not a continuation of the former. The taking of the elements by the minister before prayer, appears to me to be a matter of indifference. I should not blame him who omitted, or him who observed it; but I could not go along with the latter, if he considered it as an essential part of the ordinance.

Let us now attend to the first action of our Lord, with respect to the bread and the wine, after he had taken them. Two words are employed, which signify *to bless*, and *to give thanks*. The latter alone is used in reference to the cup, but both are used in reference to the bread, and hence it appears that they have virtually the same meaning, as one writer has chosen the one, and another writer the other. We read in our translation that Jesus "blessed the bread;" and hence it has been inferred that he consecrated it, or set it apart from a common to a sacred use. The term, consecration, has found its way even into Protestant churches, in relation to the sacraments; and ministers often speak of setting apart the elements from a common to a holy use. I presume that they are consecrated or set apart, not by the actions of men, but by the institution of Christ, or become sacred by being devoted to a sacred use. Be this as it may, the inference from the words of Scripture is groundless; because the original says simply, that our Saviour "blessed," not that he blessed the bread, for the pronoun *it* is a supplement. The meaning is, that he blessed God, as the substitution of the word, *to give thanks*,* by some of the Evangelists, plainly shows. He blessed, or gave thanks to his Father, we may presume, for his love in sending him into the world to save our fallen race, by his obedience unto death. It may be questionable whether we should venture to imitate him in the consecration of the elements, the right to do which seems to be exclusively vested in him, as the Head of the church, to whom it belongs to separate persons and things to the service of God; but there can be no doubt, that it is our duty to imitate him in his thanksgiving. We should never reflect upon his death without emotions of gratitude; and these should be particularly strong when the memorial of it is before our eyes, and we are assembled to receive a token of our interest in his atonement, and of our title to the precious blessings which it has procured. There is no occasion on which the words of the Psalmist may be adopted with greater propriety, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

Having blessed or given thanks, he constituted the bread and wine signs of his body and blood. This is the proper place to take notice of this important fact, although the elements were made significant in the act of giving them to the disciples. He said of the bread, "This is my body;" and of the wine, "This is my blood." Thus, what is called a sacramental union was established; by which nothing more is meant, than that the elements become signs or figures of his body and blood, and bear the names of the things which they represent. I have already shown you that the notion of some mystical union, which cannot be explained or understood, is unscriptural and superstitious. The relation of the symbols to the realities is the same as was the relation of the paschal lamb to our Redeemer, or as is the relation of the water in baptism to the influences of the Spirit. In all these cases, something distant and invisible is represented by another thing which is placed within the range of our senses. It does not belong to man to appoint signs of Christ's body and blood. This has been already done by his institution, and bread and wine become such signs to us, when, with prayer to God, we set them apart for this purpose. The muttering of the words of institution over the elements, to consecrate them, or transubstantiate them, more resembles, as we have said, a charm than an act of religious worship, and falsely supposes that this makes the sacrament, while it is made by the appointment of Christ.

Jesus brake the bread. It has been inquired, whether this circumstance is essential to the ordinance, or

*1 Cor. x. 17.

* Mark xvi. 23. Luke xxii. 19.

may be omitted; as it is in the Church of Rome, where the bread is exhibited in small separate pieces, called wafers, one of which is put into the mouth of each communicant. We have no hesitation in saying that it is essential; that, when it is wanting, the sacrament is not celebrated according to the original institution; and that all the reasons which require other parts of the ordinance to be retained, may be alleged with equal justice for the retention of this. It is, indeed, so essential, that the Lord's Supper is sometimes designated from it alone, and is called "the breaking of bread." The rite is significant, and is appropriate to the design of the institution, which is to commemorate our Saviour's death. He himself explained it, when he said, "This is my body which is broken for you," intimating that the broken bread is a figure of his body as wounded and lacerated for our salvation. But of this important fact there is no representation when a small morsel of bread, in its entire form, is distributed to the communicants. We are reminded by the breaking of the bread, of the severe suffering which our Lord endured, when his back was torn with a scourge, his hands and feet were pierced with nails, and his head was crowned with thorns; and our minds are naturally led to contemplate the sorrows of his soul, which had almost overwhelmed him,—sorrows which no man can comprehend, but which undoubtedly arose from a sense of Divine wrath, on account of the sins of his people which he had undertaken to expiate. I may remark, before leaving this particular, that as, in this ordinance, Christ is represented as dead for our salvation, not only is the bread broken, but the sign of his blood is separately exhibited, with an obvious intention to signify that he died by the effusion of his blood, or by its separation from his body. It is the practice in some of the Eastern churches to give the bread dipped in wine. But as this is an unauthorized innovation, so it quite subverts the design of the ordinance, so far as it is figurative; because it exhibits his blood as remaining in his body, or conjoined with it, instead of representing it as shed, according to the express words of our Lord: "This is my blood which is shed for the remission of sins."

Lastly, our Saviour gave the bread and the cup to his disciples. I formerly showed you, that the seals of covenants are intended to be used in different ways; to be looked at, as the rainbow in the clouds; to be applied externally to the body, as water in baptism; to be taken for food, as the bread and wine in the Eucharist. With regard to a seal of the last description, it was evidently necessary that it should be put into our hands, to denote the divine grant of it, and our right to make use of it. By giving the bread and wine to the disciples, we may conceive our Lord to have signified,—and the rite is still of the same import,—that he and his Father freely and irrevocably give the blessings of redemption to believers. His atonement, with all its precious fruits, is as truly theirs, as the bread and wine which have been put into their hands. The Eucharist is therefore with propriety denominated a seal, the purpose of which is to authenticate a deed. Christ gives to worthy communicants, not his real body and blood, from which they could derive no advantage, but the invaluable benefits which were purchased by the sufferings of his body and the effusion of his blood; and by the external action ratifies the gift.

Let us next attend to the actions of the disciples. The design of the Lord's Supper being to confirm the covenant of God with his people, it was necessary, on the one hand, that the ordinance should be instituted by our Saviour, and on the other, that something should be done by us to signify our consent to the covenant. With this view, we are commanded to take the bread and eat it, and to take the cup and drink it. This is all that is enjoined upon the communicants. Various observances are prescribed by the Church of Rome, which being inventions of her own are unworthy of notice; and in the Church of England, the communicants are required to receive the sacrament kneeling. It is a vestige of Popery, which it is a dishonour to a Protestant church to retain. We can understand the reason why a Papist kneels, for he believes that what he sees is the real body of Christ, which he is bound to adore; but we may be justly surprised to find a person of a different faith complying with the usage, when the reason of it is gone. He symbolizes with idolaters; and if a silly love of pomp and form, and an unscriptural reverence for antiquity, had not prevailed at the Reformation in England, this and other superstitious practices would have been swept as rubbish out of the temple of God. It might move our indignation to hear that church requiring kneeling from greater respect for the sacrament, although till lately she was accustomed to profane it in the grossest manner, by administering it to the most notorious profligates, as a qualification for office. Kneeling is a manifest deviation from the original institution. The disciples celebrated the supper in the posture which they observed at their ordinary meals. They were reclining upon couches, according to the custom of their country; and we imitate their example when we sit at the Lord's table, as we do at our own tables.

In the early periods of society, when language is not copious, men express their sentiments by actions as well as by words. This mode was adopted by the prophets, who sometimes accompanied their revelations with significant signs. It is retained in symbolical ordinances, and some traces of it are seen in the daily intercourse of life. When a proposal is made by one man to another, or a question is asked, which requires an answer in the affirmative, he is understood to consent to the proposal, or to answer the question, by bowing his head, without uttering a syllable. Our silent actions at the table of the Lord are a declaration of our sentiments, as distinct and intelligible as if we had clothed them in words. The crucified Saviour is presented to us under the figures of bread and wine; and by taking and using these we plainly signify, that we cordially receive him as our Saviour. God gives us sensible signs, to assure us that his covenant is immutable, and his promises shall be performed; and we, by accepting the signs, express our confidence in his faithfulness, and our certain expectation of the blessings which he has engaged to bestow. Hence we perceive the import of the words of the Apostle, which have been repeatedly quoted: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"* They signify that believers enjoy fellowship with their Saviour in the holy supper. His death is exhibited as the meritorious cause of their reconciliation to God; and it is exhibited in so impressive a manner, as to strengthen their faith, and to fill them with joy and peace in believing. But this is the privilege of those alone who are possessed of the faith of which the actions performed by them are expressive. When it is wanting, the actions are hypocritical; the symbols are received, but the Saviour is rejected; and the unworthy communicant is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; that is, the irreverence with which he uses the symbols terminates upon him whom they represent, and he, as it were, crucifies the Son of God afresh, and puts him to open shame.

From this view of the actions enjoined upon Chris-

* 1 Cor. x. 16.

tians in the celebration of the Eucharist, it appears, that it is intended to be a public declaration of our faith in Christ. When he instituted the ordinance, he said, "Do this in remembrance of me." It is a memorial of his death, which serves not only to perpetuate the knowledge of that event, but to signify in what esteem it is held, and what importance is attached to it by his followers. It is commemorated not merely as the death of a friend and benefactor, of a teacher distinguished by his wisdom, or of a saint illustrious for his virtues; but of a Redeemer who laid down his life as a ransom for our souls. Every man who partakes of the sacred symbols is understood to declare, whatever may be his secret sentiments, that he acknowledges Jesus Christ in the character of his Saviour, and founds his hope of salvation upon his sacrifice. He presents to God the death of his Son, as his only plea for his favour; and avows to the world, that however lightly they may esteem the salvation of Christ, he prefers it to every sublunary enjoyment.

Again, in the Lord's supper we enter into a solemn engagement to serve him, who loved us, and gave himself for us. I formerly remarked, that it is commonly supposed to have been called a sacrament, in allusion to the military oath of the Romans to be obedient to their general. I assigned my reason for thinking that this is a mistake; and that the word, sacrament, was used as equivalent to mystery. Be this however as it may, the celebrated passage in the epistle of the younger Pliny to Trajan, which represents the primitive Christians as binding themselves by an oath not to commit murder, theft, adultery, or any other crime, and which I have no doubt refers to the Lord's supper, points out the view which was then entertained of that ordinance. While it was a commemoration of the death of Christ, it was understood to be an engagement to duty. It is an acknowledgment that we are not our own, but are bought with a price, and that we are therefore bound to glorify our Saviour, with our bodies and our spirits which are his. And as there is no communion between light and darkness, those are guilty of the vilest hypocrisy, and of a daring profanation of the ordinance, who observe it while they are living in known and deliberate sin, and are resolved to continue any practice which is forbidden by the law of Christ, or to omit any duty which it enjoins.

Once more, the celebration of the Eucharist is an expressive sign of the communion of Christians with one another in love; for they meet at the table of the Lord as brethren and children of the same family, to partake of the same spiritual feast. The Apostle authorizes this view of the subject by the words formerly quoted. "For we being many, are one body, and one bread," or one loaf, "for we are all partakers of that one loaf."* It seems to have been the custom to provide a loaf of bread, which was broken, and distributed to the communicants; and the Apostle observes, that they were one like the loaf of which they all shared; their participation of it being a symbol of their union to one another, as well as to Christ, the head of his mystical body. In testimony of their mutual love, the primitive Christians were wont, at least in the second century, before they proceeded to celebrate the Eucharist, to give each other the kiss of charity; and immediately after, as we likewise learn from Justin Martyr, "they contributed according to their ability and inclination; and what was collected was delivered to the bishop or president of the assembly, who relieved with it widows and orphans, the sick, and those who were in want from any other cause, prisoners, travellers, and strangers, and in a word, all that had need."† Paul exhorts the Corinthians to "keep the feast, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness;"‡ intimating that envy, resentment, hatred, and revenge, which so ill accord with the Christian character at any time, are particularly incongruous on this occasion, when no affection towards our brethren should be entertained but the purest charity. There are several considerations, which will naturally occur, and are calculated to draw Christians together in the strictest bonds of friendship. Their character is the same, for they are all professed disciples of one Master; their privileges are the same, for they are admitted to the same holy communion with him; they are all, if they are genuine believers, equally dear to the Saviour; and they have the hope of meeting in their Father's house, and spending eternity in the most delightful intercourse.

Our Lord has shown for whose use this ordinance is intended, by administering it to his disciples; and a conclusion may be deduced from the passover, to which the Israelites alone had access, and those who had joined themselves to them by submitting to circumcision. "This is the ordinance of the passover; There shall no stranger eat thereof. And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof."* Since circumcision was an indispensable qualification for eating the passover, it follows that baptism, which has succeeded to it, is requisite to entitle a person to a seat at the table of the Lord. I do not know that this was ever called in question till lately, that a controversy has arisen among the English Baptists, whether persons of other Christian denominations may not be occasionally admitted to the holy communion with them; and it became necessary for those who adopted the affirmative, to maintain that baptism is not a previous condition. This assertion arose out of their peculiar system, which denies the validity of infant baptism. But to every man who contents himself with a plain view of the subject, and has no purpose to serve by subtleties and refinements, it will appear that baptism is as much the initiating ordinance of the Christian, as circumcision was of the Jewish, dispensation. An uncircumcised man was not permitted to eat the passover, and an unbaptized man should not be permitted to partake of the Eucharist.

But baptism is not the only qualification. We learn from the law of Moses, that when any of the Israelites had contracted ceremonial uncleanness, they were not allowed to join with their brethren in the paschal solemnity; and for their accommodation a second passover was appointed at the distance of a month, during which they would be purified.† Every person who has been baptized does not possess the moral qualifications which would entitle him to be accounted a disciple of Christ. He may be an open apostate from the faith; or he may be so ignorant of religion, and so irregular in his conduct, that it would be an abuse of charity to consider him as a Christian. Hence we demand, in candidates for the Lord's table, a competent measure of knowledge, a profession of faith in Christ, and a behaviour which will justify us in believing them to be sincere. "All ignorant and ungodly persons," says our Church, "as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table, and cannot without great sin against Christ while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto."‡

Hitherto I have spoken of those who have a right of admission in the judgment of the Church. But its judgment is fallible, as the state of the heart cannot be certainly known, and it rests solely upon external evidence. If it be inquired, Who have a right

* 1 Cor. x. 17. † Just. Mart. Apol. 2. ‡ 1 Cor. v. 8.

* Exod. xiii. 43, 48. † Numb. ix. 6—12.
‡ Conf. xxix. § 8.

before God? we must answer, that believers are the only persons; and for this obvious reason, that the Eucharist is a seal of the covenant of grace, an interest in which is obtained by faith. But even believers are not always prepared to engage in this spiritual service. If their faith has declined; if their consciences are wounded by sin; if they have incurred the displeasure of God; they are not worthy to appear before him, nor capable of the holy exercises which the ordinance calls for, till they are renewed by repentance.

The reason why the exhortation of Paul to the Corinthians, "Let a man examine himself," is still brought forward by the ministers of religion, is the mixed nature of the societies over which they preside, and the imperfect state even of genuine Christians. An investigation of their character by the light of Scripture, may discover to some an unworthiness which they did not suspect, and to others a fitness of which they were in doubt. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that self-examination must precede the participation of the Lord's Supper, in the case of every man upon every occasion. There can be no reason for instituting an inquiry respecting a point which is fully ascertained. He who possesses the assurance of faith, and walks in the light of God's countenance; he who loves the law of God, and whose conscience bears testimony to his sincerity, knows his right, and may exercise it when he has an opportunity. The exhortation of Paul primarily respected a society of professed Christians, among whom great irregularities prevailed, and to whom a call to sit in judgment upon themselves was seasonably and properly addressed.

To assist Christians in this inquiry, is the design of that part of the service of our Church which is commonly called Fencing the Tables. You will remember, however, that it is merely an expedient suggested by human prudence, and that it is not supported by scriptural precept, or apostolical example. It is therefore a vulgar prejudice to account it essential to the ordinance, and to imagine that it adds any thing to its perfection or solemnity. The truth is, that to aid his people in examining themselves, should be the object of a minister from the beginning to the end of the year; and that he should study so to divide the word of truth, that all may be furnished with the means of ascertaining their state and character before they assemble to celebrate the Supper. But although this part of the service is not necessary, is not adopted in many Christian societies, and might be laid aside without in any degree impairing the original institution, at which it was not observed; yet there is no doubt that it has been productive of good, and might have produced more, if it had been judiciously conducted. Ministers should beware of the two extremes, of being too easy or too severe; of being too easy, lest they embolden the profane; and of being too severe, lest they discourage the pious. There is danger to be apprehended from their boundless charity, and from their gloominess and narrow-mindedness. The word of God is the only standard of character; and as it excludes all who are living in sin, so it invites all who love the Saviour, although their love should be as a grain of mustard-seed. The plan at present pursued in our Church is preferable to that of our predecessors, who, taking the decalogue as their standard, excommunicated sinners of every description and degree, many of whom were known not to be present, and would have disclaimed the privilege which was publicly denied to them. What had they to do to judge those who were without; ought they not to have judged those alone who were within?*

How often the Lord's Supper should be celebrated, is a question which has undergone much discussion. Some contend that it should be administered every Sabbath; but in my opinion, the proof from Scripture completely fails. Nothing can be inferred from the words of Luke concerning the primitive disciples, that "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,"* unless it should be said, that they ate the Lord's Supper as often as they prayed, which no man in his senses ever affirmed. The case of the disciples at Troas is as little to the purpose; for when we read, that "on the first day of the week, when they came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them,"† it would be a strange fancy to suppose, that to break bread was the uniform design of their meetings on the Sabbath. We should thus suppose, contrary to Scripture, and to the history of the primitive church, that this was the main object of all their religious assemblies, that for which their meetings were held, and to which the preaching of the gospel was secondary and subservient; whereas the narrative plainly imports that it was an occasional design, suggested by the incidental presence of the Apostle. From the words of Paul to the Corinthians, "ye come together not for the better, but for the worse," compared with what he afterwards says, "when ye come together, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper,"‡ it has been concluded, that always when they came together they observed this ordinance; because, otherwise, there could be no force in the argument, that they came together for the worse, which refers to the disorders of which they were guilty in communicating. This is truly wonderful logic, which the initiated may understand, but to every other person it is unintelligible. All that the Apostle affirms is, that when the Corinthians celebrated the Lord's Supper in a riotous manner, they came together for the worse. He says not one word about the frequency or the rareness of their meetings. The stupidity of this criticism is almost equalled by that which is founded on the words, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup," and represents our Lord as enjoining a frequent celebration of the Supper; whereas every person knows that we use the phrase, as often, in reference to an action which we perform only once a year, as well as to an action which we perform once a day. *As often* as I take a meal, I ask the Divine blessing upon it. This happens three or four times a day. *As often* as I go to Edinburgh, I go by a particular road. This happens once or twice a year. Both expressions are equally proper, and imply only, that when the one thing takes place, the other always accompanies it.

Were we to judge of the Eucharist by human commemorative institutions, we should suppose it to return at distant intervals; or, were we to judge of it by similar institutions of Divine appointment, as the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, we should conclude that it was to be observed once a year. There is no precept of Scripture, no apostolical example, to regulate our practice. Churches are left at liberty to order their procedure according to their own views of expedience and utility. The sacred feast should not be treated as if it were of no value, and so rarely celebrated as to be almost forgotten; nor should it be magnified above other ordinances, and represented as of indispensable necessity on every occasion. And it is arrogance in any denomination of Christians to imagine that they excel other Christians, merely because this ordinance is more frequently dispensed among them.

* 1 Cor. v. 12.

* Acts ii. 42. † Ib. xx. 7. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 17. 20.

LECTURE XCIII.

ON PRAYER.

Prayer Natural to Man.—Definition of Prayer; Comprehensive of Adoration, Thanksgiving, Confession, and Petition.—Object of Prayer, God.—Connexion Between the Character of God and the Duty of Prayer.—Addressed to God the Father.—Notice of Objections to Prayer.—The Word of God, the Rule of Prayer.—Blessings to be implored.

In the Gospel, Jesus Christ addresses us in the name of his Father, declaring his gracious counsels, and presenting to us the blessings of salvation, accompanied with an invitation and command to receive them. In the sacraments, the same subjects are exhibited by symbols; and as they are signs of redemption, so they are seals for the confirmation of the promises, that the faith of true Christians may be strengthened, and they may abound in consolation and hope. This external dispensation of religion requires, on their part, certain sentiments and affections of the mind, corresponding to the nature of the truths proclaimed, and the facts brought under their view; and certain actions significant of their internal emotions, and of their consent to the covenant into which God has admitted them. But the whole of religion is not comprehended in the manifestations of his good-will towards them, and the silent expressions of their faith; as he speaks to them, it is their duty to speak to him in the humble and animated language of devotion. Nor does their duty consist solely in accepting the gifts which he is pleased to bestow; they are enjoined not to wait supinely for the visitations of his favour, but to solicit them, and to present their requests in every season of need.

Man is so constituted, that the movements of his mind give an impulse to his body, and discover themselves by external signs. The contemplation of high degrees of excellence, the reception of valuable benefits, the apprehension of change, and the feeling of distress, give rise to involuntary exclamations, to gestures, and to modifications of the features. Thus a foundation is laid in human nature for the outward signs of devotion, whether they consist in words or in postures of the body. When the Scripture commands us to bow down and kneel before God, and to "lift our eyes and our hands" to his oracle, to "make known our requests" to him in words, and "to call upon his name," "to cry with a loud voice," and "to praise him in songs," it merely calls upon us, in our intercourse with him, to give scope to propensities or tendencies of our nature, which are called forth on other occasions, when our sentiments and feelings are powerfully excited. Religion does not consist solely in silent meditation. It demands the service of the whole man; and there are moments when the tongue must be employed to give utterance to the varied affections of the heart.

The subject to which I propose now to direct your attention is Prayer. It may be strictly defined to be the supplicatory address of a creature to his Creator, in which he humbly entreats him to confer some blessing, to remove some present evil, or to defend him from future danger, which he has reason to fear. It is usually understood, however, with greater latitude; and comprehends, according to the definition of our Church, petition, confession, and thanksgiving, to which may be added adoration.*

Adoration is the devout celebration of the perfections of God, and of his works, in which they are displayed. It is incumbent upon us to admire the transcendent excellence of his character, to acknowledge him as the first and the greatest of all beings, and to record to his honour the wonderful manifestations of himself which he has made in creation, providence, and redemption. The Scriptures are full of examples which it would be endless to cite: "O Lord my God, thou art very great: thou art clothed with honour and majesty; who coverest thyself with light as with a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain."* We, indeed, can add nothing to his glory and felicity, nor, in our highest elevation, can we think of him in a manner at all worthy of his greatness; but sentiments of reverence and admiration necessarily arise in the mind which contemplates him, and adoration is the tribute which we owe to the Author of our existence, who has revealed himself to our eyes. This act of devotion is expressed by praising and blessing God. We bless him, or pronounce him to be blessed, in whom there is an assemblage of every thing great, and good, and lovely, and who, independent of his creatures, possesses all his resources in himself; and we praise him as the model of perfection, the eternal source of life, and beauty, and felicity, the incomparable One, before whom the universe is less than nothing, and vanity: "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Thanksgiving is the expression of our gratitude for the favours which we have received from him. They are bestowed without the expectation of a recompense; and, indeed, as he stands in need of nothing, so we have nothing to give; but nature itself dictates, and religion demands, that we should entertain a lively sense of his goodness, and should give utterance to our feelings on appropriate occasions. Devout men of former times have set us an example: "Bless the Lord, O my soul," says the Psalmist, "and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."† Thanksgivings naturally are associated with petitions; for it is impossible, when we present ourselves before a benefactor to solicit him to befriend us again, not to recall former tokens of his kindness; and we shall have the surer hope of success in our new application, when we show that we have been duly impressed by the past. We find the apostle Paul repeatedly mingling thanksgivings with his prayers.

Confession is the acknowledgment of our sins to God, whom we have offended. It is the natural expression of genuine repentance, which so affects us with a sense of our baseness and demerit, that we cannot refrain from accusing and condemning ourselves. With many of our sins, our fellow-men have nothing to do; and if they are secret, we are under no obligation to publish them. They have no right to call us to account, and no power to pardon us. God knows them all; and we confess them to him, not to give him information, but to own our guilt, to abase ourselves in his presence, to glorify his holiness and justice, and to signify that we are worthy of punishment, and hope to be forgiven and restored to favour only through his mercy. Of this description was the prayer of David: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."‡ The prayer of the Pharisee was rejected, because it consisted of thanksgiving alone; the formal, hypocritical thanksgiving of a man who gloried in his fancied superiority to others, but for the

* Larger Cat. Q. 178. Shorter Cat. Q. 98.

* Ps. civ. 1, 2. † Ib. ciii. 1—4. ‡ Ib. li. 1, 3, 4.

sake of decorum paid a passing compliment to God for having helped him to attain this pre-eminence: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are."*

Petition is the request of some favours from God. I have already observed that prayer, in the proper sense of the word, consists in petition alone. We ask blessings from God, because he is the sole fountain of good; and we ask blessings of every kind, because they are at his disposal. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."† Our state of constant dependence and constant want, renders it necessary that we should be always presenting petitions. We have no permanent source of supply at our command, and even what we possess we cannot call our own. He who has received grace, should pray that it may be continued and increased; he who possesses a competent portion of this world's goods, should still pray for his daily bread, because, without the divine blessing, his riches will make to themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle towards heaven; his food will not nourish, and his garments will not warm him.

Prayer should be addressed to God alone: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."‡ Nothing can be more explicit than this declaration, which should have precluded, among those who acknowledge the Divine authority of the Scriptures, all deviations from the path of duty so clearly marked out in them. It is sufficient to justify us in rejecting the worship which is given in the Church of Rome to saints and angels, and in pronouncing it to be idolatrous. As the statute is express, so the reasons on which it is founded are obvious.

First, God alone can hear all our requests. He is present with us wherever we are, and not only listens to our words, but understands our thoughts and the desires of our hearts. In vain should we address ourselves to a being, with respect to whom we were in doubt whether our voice could reach him, and he were able to look beyond the exterior, and to judge of our sincerity. This consideration alone demonstrates the folly, as well as the impiety, of addressing prayer to creatures. High as is the rank of glorified spirits, and great as is the enlargement of their powers, we have no authentic information that they are acquainted with the affairs of men upon the earth. It is not improbable that, except so far as God may be pleased to make discoveries to them for particular purposes, they are ignorant of our affairs; and to suppose them to know all things, and especially to know the heart, would be to suppose them to be gods. The ironical words of Elijah to the priests of Baal, may be addressed with the utmost propriety to the man who prays to saints: "Cry aloud, for either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."‖ But all things are "naked and manifest to him with whom we have to do;" and we pray to him, because we are assured that his ear is always open to our cry. Besides the simple knowledge of our requests, his unerring wisdom can decide upon every case which comes under his notice. None of those mistakes will happen, which result from the short-sighted benevolence of human benefactors; he perceives what will be for our good, and what would be prejudicial to us, and we may implicitly resign ourselves to his disposal.

Secondly, God alone can grant our requests. There is nothing at the absolute disposal of creatures. As there are many things which they cannot do at all, so those things which are understood to lie within the sphere of their ability, they can do only when God permits, and assists them by his providence or grace. Why then should we apply to saints, or even to angels, who are dependent as well as we, and, although superior to us, are subject to similar restraints? An angel could not deliver us from death, for he does not hold the keys of the grave and the invisible world; an angel could not pardon our sins, for he is not the Supreme Lawgiver, and the dispenser of mercy. A saint, a glorified saint, has no grace to communicate to us, for he has not more than he needs for himself; he could not, by his own power, relieve us for a single moment from pain, or procure for us a draught of water in the parched and thirsty wilderness. To the worshippers of such beings we may apply the words of the prophet, "They have no knowledge that pray unto a god that cannot save;"* and we may add, that they would not save although they could, for the blessed inhabitants of heaven are too zealous for the Divine glory, to appropriate any part of it to themselves, or to sympathize with the impious men who attempt to raise them to an equal rank with the Most High. To him the earth belongs, and the fulness thereof; the heaven also is his, with all its treasures, and what good thing can his creatures ask which he is not able to bestow? "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."† We come, in prayer, to a fountain which is pouring out a copious and overflowing stream of blessings, and yet is always full. As withholding doth not enrich, so giving doth not impoverish him; and we have no reason, therefore, to fear lest our frequent demands should exhaust his beneficence, or our importunity should displease him. The benevolence of creatures may be restrained by the apprehension that, by giving much to others, they shall not have enough for themselves; but God is all sufficient, and his favour is never solicited in vain.

This leads me to remark, in the third place, that God is willing to grant our requests. Prayer proceeds upon the idea of the benevolence of his nature. Were we to conceive of him as a malevolent or a selfish Being; were we to imagine even that he is indifferent, or that he would deem it beneath his dignity to take notice of such insignificant creatures and their petty affairs, there would be no inducement to present our petitions to him, and our labour would be bestowed in vain. On such views of the Deity, the Epicureans pronounced all religion to be vain; and some modern philosophers place him at such a distance from men, that every tie which seemed to unite them is broken; and shut up in the mysteriousness of his essence, he is only an object of uninteresting speculation. The Divine Being is communicative, not however necessarily, as the sun gives out his rays, or the fountain its streams, for then the universe should have existed from eternity, and all its inhabitants would be happy, and happy in the highest degree. But there is a principle in God which disposes him to diffuse felicity, according to the dictates of his wisdom, and in accordance with his other perfections; and in this principle originated the creation of heaven and earth, and the dispensations of providence and grace. It is the knowledge of this feature in the Divine character, which encourages us to present our supplications. He is good, and does good, and for this reason we pray to him. And surely, when we reflect upon the infinite fulness of God, to which the goodness of the most perfect creature bears a less proportion than a drop bears to all the waters on the surface and in the bowels of the globe; and upon his willingness to exercise it, which the Scriptures labour to express by the selection of a variety of terms, calling it his love, grace, mercy, good pleasure, and compassion; we may

* Luke xxiii. 11. † James i. 17. ‡ Matth. iv. 10.
‖ 1 Kings xviii. 27.

* Isa. xlv. 20. † Phil. iv. 19.

say of those who address their prayers to the angels or the saints, in the words of God concerning the Israelites, who transferred their homage from him to the gods of the surrounding nations, "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."*

It were easy to show that all the other parts of prayer, when taken in its most extensive sense, are founded on the character and perfections of God; adoration on his transcendent excellence and unrivalled greatness; thanksgiving on the numerous and valuable benefits which he confers; confession on the relation in which he stands to us, as our offended Maker and Judge. But I have confined myself to prayer, properly so called, or petition; and in this light it will be viewed, in what I have farther to say upon the subject.

The reasons which have been now stated, hold out encouragement to pray, and prove that our prayers should be addressed to God alone. But in consequence of the situation in which we are placed as sinful creatures, something further is necessary to be known with respect to the object of worship. The conclusions which innocent beings may legitimately deduce from his character, are not applicable to the case of the guilty; who, if they reasoned justly, would infer that from his goodness they have nothing to expect, and that his perfect knowledge supplies the evidence on which his power will be justly exerted in subjecting them to punishment. The criminal may venture to solicit the favour of his judge; but what would be the foundation of his hope, if there were no indication that he is mercifully disposed?

The prayers which sinners offer up to God are founded, or should be founded, on the dispensation of grace. The important question whether God is placable, upon which the religion of the guilty depends, is answered by the gospel, which declares that he is not only willing to be appeased, but that he is actually reconciled to us by the atonement of his Son. The obstacle to the reception of fallen men, and the communication of blessings to them, is removed. The demands of justice have been satisfied; the law which they had broken, has been honoured by the fulfilment of its precepts, and the establishment of its authority; and consistently with the holiness and righteousness of his character and administration, God may extend his favour to those who in themselves deserved condemnation and wrath. Spiritual and heavenly blessings have been obtained for them, and exhibited in the promises; and these are ratified with the blood of our Saviour. Hence you perceive, that all our prayers should have a respect to his mediation. God should be contemplated as manifested in him, and the displays of his perfections in creation and providence can give encouragement to us, only when they are viewed in connexion with the work of redemption, in which they assume an aspect of benevolence to man, and are engaged, if I may speak so, to co-operate for our good. The Maker of heaven and earth will appear to the person who is apprised of his natural condition, to be an object of confidence and hope, only when he is considered at the same time as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him the Father of mercies, and the God of all grace and consolation. The mediation of Christ furnishes the sole ground on which we can expect success; it supplies the arguments with which we should enforce our petitions; and when we do receive a favourable answer, it is granted in consideration, not of our sincerity and fervour, but of his merit and intercession. Hence you perceive for what reason our Saviour has commanded us to ask all things in his name, and also when we do comply with this injunction. The mere mention of his name is not sufficient; for it is introduced into many a prayer, which breathes a spirit the most adverse to the Gospel, into the prayers of the self-righteous, who trust much more to themselves than to him. They alone pray in his name, who, fully convinced of their own unworthiness, depend on him alone for acceptance. "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."* There is then an essential difference between the prayers of a Christian, and those of the professor of any other religion. The latter addresses God as the Creator; but the former as the Redeemer of the human race. Both may appeal to the divine mercy; but the one contemplates it under the vague and general notion of benevolence awakened by the spectacle of misery, leaving the idea of justice or moral rectitude out of sight; while the other fixes his attention upon the specific manifestation of it in harmony with all the attributes of Deity. The Christian approaches God by an intercessor, whose merits will secure the acceptance of his requests; but the Mahometan and the philosopher appears for himself, and trusts that the naked representation of his case will prevail upon the Almighty to regard him with a propitious eye. We are not left in doubt which of these modes of prayer is pleasing to God, and will draw down his blessing upon us. "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me."†

As God is revealed to us in a plurality of persons, when we say that he is the object of prayer, we must be understood to mean, that prayer should be addressed to each of those persons. A title to religious worship is not peculiar to any of them, but is common to them all. There is the same ground of honour in each, namely, the possession of the divine essence and perfections. The Father is the first in order; but we must not add with some, in dignity also, lest we destroy the equality and undeify the other persons of the Trinity. There is no perfection in the Father, which is not also in the Son and in the Holy Ghost. Examples of religious worship addressed to them as well as to the Father occur in the Scriptures, which are the standard of our faith and practice. In his last moments, the blessed martyr Stephen prayed to Jesus Christ, whom he saw standing at the right hand of God: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."‡ Equal honour is given to the holy Ghost. He is understood to be signified by the seven spirits before the throne, to whom John prayed for grace to the churches,‖ as well as the eternal Father, and his Son the only begotten from the dead, and we continue to pray to him in our public assemblies, when in the language of an apostle, we say, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you. Amen."§ Thus we have a full warrant to call upon any of the sacred persons of the Godhead. They are all present to hear and to help us; and the part which each sustains in the economy of redemption, holds out the highest encouragement to make known our requests to him. We may with all confidence draw near to the Father who loved us, to the Son who died for us, and to the Spirit who sanctifies and comforts us.

But the ordinary mode of worship, which is established by the Christian dispensation, is to address the Father, in the name of the Son, and by the assistance of the Holy Ghost: and it is pointed out by the Apostle in the following words. "Through him," that is, Christ, "we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."¶ To the Father a place of eminence and dignity is assigned in redemption. He is, if I may ex-

* Jer. ii. 13.

* Phil. iii. 3. † John xiv. 6. ‡ Acts. vii. 59.
‖ Rev. i. 4. § 2 Cor. xiii. 14. ¶ Eph. ii. 18.

press myself so, the representative of the Godhead, who asserts its rights, and demands satisfaction to its justice; and hence, although all the persons were equally dishonoured by the sins of men, and the scheme of salvation originated in their common consent, it was his anger which the sacrifice of the cross was offered to avert, and it is his favour which we are directed to implore. The love of the divine nature is manifested and exercised towards us in the person of the Father. On this account, although not to the exclusion of the other persons,—who, as we have seen, may be directly addressed,—he is the object of those devotional duties, in which the feelings excited in our souls by the contemplation and experience of divine goodness are expressed. In him the infinite glory, the unbounded perfection, the transcendent benevolence of the Godhead, are manifested; and we look to him as our refuge, and our strength, and our present help in trouble. Through Christ we believe in God, who raised him from the dead. Christ was constituted the way, the truth, and the life, that we might come to the Father; his blood was shed that we might have boldness to enter into the holiest of all. Since then it appears from the New Testament, and from the remarks which have been made, that the Father is the ordinary object of Christian worship, it will be proper to inquire distinctly in what light he should be viewed when we pray to him.

First, We must beware of considering him as alone, or as exclusively entitled to our worship, and should remember that the pre-eminence which is implied in his being the peculiar object of our prayers, is merely economical. Even when we address the Father, we do not give honour to him alone. As the Divine nature which is in him is also in the Son and the Spirit, in worshipping him we worship the whole Trinity. We worship God, and each of these persons is God. In consequence of the essential union, although one of the persons may be immediately in the contemplation of the mind, we cannot divide the honour so as to withhold it from another; and, besides, as the Father is the representative of the Godhead, the glory which terminates in the first instance upon him, redounds to the Son and the Spirit. We honour them in the Father, with whom they are one. This reasoning is justified by our Lord's express declaration: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."*

Secondly, It is evident from what has been already said, that we must consider him as reconciled. In this light the gospel reveals him as the object of prayer. The majesty, and power, and moral purity of the mysterious Being who presides over nature and pervades all space, are calculated to overwhelm us with awe and terror; but the mild glory of mercy shining in the face of Jesus Christ, revives and comforts the amazed and trembling soul. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

Lastly, We should consider him as our Father; and in this relation believers are authorized to claim him, in consequence of his relation to their Saviour. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."† When our Lord taught his disciples to pray, he directed them to begin with saying, "Our Father which art in heaven." This character, which he has condescended to assume, reminds us of the temper of mind with which we should approach the throne of heaven; not as slaves, who are afraid to utter their requests before a haughty and unfeeling master; nor as criminals, trembling in the presence of a judge who has their life at his disposal; but as children confident of the affection of their parent, with the language of faith in our mouths, and the expectation of grace in our hearts. The name of Father awakens every pleasing emotion. Will he not lend an ear to our requests, although presented with much unworthiness? Will not his compassion prompt him to relieve our distress? Will not his hand bestow all the blessings which we need? Christians should reflect, that they are speaking to a Father whose heart is more tender than that of the most affectionate earthly parent, from whose ample stores they may expect the supply of all their wants, and to whose all-wise disposal they may resign themselves without fear.

In speaking of the object of worship, I have shown that his essential attributes, his dispensations, and the character of a Father which he has assumed, lay a foundation for the duty of prayer, and hold out encouragement to engage in it. But the same subject is viewed in different lights, according to the different states of mind in individuals, the associations which they have formed, the dispositions which predominate, and the objects which they have in view. Hence, we find men not only contending about principles, but sometimes drawing from the same principle the most opposite inferences. A striking example is furnished by the different conclusions at which men have arrived respecting the connexion between the character of God and the duty of prayer. While we have endeavoured to prove that his character authorizes and encourages the duty, others have inferred that it is no duty at all, and have supported the assertion by an appeal to the same grounds on which our reasoning is founded. Since God knows our wants, it can serve no purpose to tell him of them, as if he needed information; and if he is a Being of infinite benevolence, there is no occasion to make use of entreaties, and to fill our mouths with arguments, because his own nature will undoubtedly prompt him to promote the happiness of his creatures. There is another argument against prayer, derived from the wisdom and immutability of God. As he is an infallible judge of what is proper to be done, he surely will do it whether we ask him or not; and if he has determined that it is not proper, vain and presumptuous is the hope that we shall prevail upon him to alter his purpose by our importunity.

In answer to these objections, I would observe, that although prayer is certainly not necessary to give information to God, yet it does not follow from this concession that it is superfluous, because there may be other reasons of great importance for which it is required. It may be enjoined as the means of impressing our own minds more deeply with a sense of our wants, and of bringing them into that state in which alone it is proper that blessings should be bestowed upon us. It may be enjoined, too, to affect us more strongly with a feeling of our dependence upon God, and to express that feeling to others who witness our prayers, with a view to convince them and ourselves, that the good things which we obtain do not come to us by chance, but by his appointment and agency. To suppose that his infinite goodness will prompt him to supply our wants without any solicitation on our part, is a hasty inference from a partial view of his character, and is contrary to the analogy of his general administration. The supposition proceeds upon the idea, that benevolence is the only attribute of his nature, and that he is instinctively and necessarily impelled by it to communicate himself, as the sun necessarily gives light, or a fountain pours out its contents. But as God is possessed of other perfections, there may be moral restraints upon his benevolence; there may be reasons why it should not be exercised indiscriminately, and why the supplications of his creatures should precede the distribution of his gifts. The argument proves nothing, by proving too much; for if we infer from his benevolence that there is no necessity for prayer, we might also infer that there is no necessity for means of any kind, and that all our wants will be supplied without labour.

* John xiv. 9. † Ib. xx. 17.

God, however, has not ordained that the earth should spontaneously yield its fruits, but has made its productions the reward of cultivation; and it is therefore conformable to the order of things that men should first ask, and then receive.

The argument from the wisdom of God, which, it is said, will lead him to do what is fit without being asked, establishes the very point which it is intended to disprove. There are many things, no doubt, which will advance his glory, and which he will therefore do independently of us; but the point now under consideration, is the communication of blessings to individuals, and the question is, Whether it would be proper to bestow favours upon them without prayer? We answer, that it would not be proper, because it would tend to cherish a spirit of impiety, to dissolve the moral relation of man to his Maker, to encourage the neglect of him, which is too natural, and the ingratitude which we so often display amidst the most abundant tokens of his goodness. Would it be proper that a guilty man should be pardoned, who will not be at pains to implore the mercy of his sovereign? or that Divine grace should help and comfort us, while we are too indifferent to request its assistance? To talk of wisdom doing what is fit to be done, as a reason why prayer should be restrained, is to use words which either mean nothing, or lead to a conclusion exactly the reverse of that which is deduced from them. God will do what is worthy of himself; but it would not be worthy of him to adopt a mode of procedure which would terminate in the extinction of religious sentiments. We acknowledge that God is immutable, and therefore acknowledge that it would be vain to hope that we shall change his purpose by our entreaties. Our prayers are offered up with no such design. We do not conceive that there is any decree which must be reversed before they can be answered. If there is any case in which it is uncertain whether our wishes are in unison with the will of God, as when we pray for the recovery of others from sickness, our petitions are presented with this reservation. In other cases, we assume, upon the authority of his word, that he is ready to bestow blessings upon us, and only waits till we have made our humble and earnest request. We ask them with confidence, because we know that he is willing to give them to those who ask in faith. We do not call upon God to alter the established order of his administration, but to act conformably to it; and this is the order, as we are informed by the highest authority: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."* Now, here is nothing to be changed, no new inclination to be excited in the object of worship. It is agreeable to his character and his purpose to attend to the supplications of men, for he is described in his own word as the Hearer of prayer. Whatever false notions the ignorant may entertain of God, as if he resembled a man, whose judgment may be convinced by arguments, and whose affection may be gained over to those whom he has formerly regarded with aversion; true Christians believe that he is of himself disposed to fulfil our desires. They do, indeed, expect that he will do something for them, in consequence of their prayers, which he would not have done if they had not prayed; but they do not, therefore, consider him to be a changeable Being. To give blessings when they are asked, which he would not have given if they had not been asked, is not more a proof of mutability, than it is to crown with his goodness a cultivated field, which would have yielded nothing for the nourishment of men, if it had not been ploughed and sown. Prayer, then, is not an attempt to prevail upon the Almighty to alter his plan; but it either supposes or produces in us that state of mind which his wisdom requires as a preparation for the reception of his favours. And certainly it does not destroy or diminish the freeness of Divine mercies, that they must be sought before they can be obtained. Who would call in question the benevolence of the man who was disposed to assist every person who applied to him?

Thus, it appears that the objections urged against prayer have no force, and are as little founded on reason as in Scripture. They have been suggested by the Spirit of irreligion, which labours to estrange man from his Maker, and says to the Almighty, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

The rule of prayer is the word of God. Experience, indeed, makes us acquainted with our wants; but the information which we derive from it, relates chiefly to the necessities of the body, and of the present life. The wants of the soul are little felt, till the mind is enlightened, and the conscience is awakened by the truths of revelation. It is only in its light that we see ourselves to be ignorant, guilty, polluted, miserable, and helpless, when left to our own resources and the assistance of our fellow-creatures. A sense of need is an indispensable pre-requisite to prayer; but it still remains to ascertain whether God is willing to relieve us, and to what extent we may expect his goodness to be exercised. It is evident that, on this subject, we can obtain satisfactory information only from himself, and that without an express manifestation of his good will, we could have no sure ground to go upon in our requests. We might ask what he has no intention to bestow, and neglect what he is ready to give. "The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer;" its doctrines exhibiting the privileges which he confers upon believers; its precepts enjoining duties which only his grace can enable us to perform; its histories relating the blessings which men in former ages have obtained; its threatenings denouncing evils from which no arm but his own can deliver us; its promises holding out to us the good things prepared for those who seek him; and the prayers of the saints being recorded as patterns to us, when we are placed in similar circumstances.

It is of the utmost importance to attend to this rule in our supplications. In reference to this subject, we may say that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from above; or, in other words, has no ground to expect any blessing from God, unless there be a warrant for asking it in his word. The prayers of ungodly men, for they sometimes pray, are not regulated by this standard, but by the suggestions of imagination, and the desires of their hearts. Give us riches, they say, give us honours, give us long life, give us something to gratify our appetites, our ambition, our avarice. Even if they should happen to present their petitions for blessings which God has promised, they have no respect to his wisdom and goodness, as pledged in his faithful word, but are impelled solely by their eager wishes to obtain what will contribute to improve their condition. But we are not permitted to assail his throne with our crude and random petitions. The spirit, who "makes intercession for the saints," enables them to intercede for themselves, "according to the will of God."* His grace is the source of supply; and it therefore becomes our duty to conform our requests to the rule or measure of distribution established by himself. We proceed safely, and may feel the utmost confidence, when we found our petitions upon Scripture; for we are certain that, in this case, we are doing what is agreeable to God, and there is a perfect harmony between his will and our desires. But, as soon as we permit our own

* Matth. vii. 7.

* Rom. viii. 27.

views of expedience and advantage to dictate, we must be perplexed with doubt and the fear of offending, unless all the misgivings of mind be precluded by profound ignorance, and complete moral insensibility. Then only can we pray in faith, when we have a Divine declaration or promise as the ground of our petition, and can address God in the words of the holy Psalmist: "And now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said."*

The word of God is our directory in prayer. It holds out encouragement to us to pray for all blessings; for he says, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."† Nothing really necessary to us can be pointed out, which is not contained in some declaration or promise. The blessings for which we should pray may be distributed into two classes, temporal and spiritual. Spiritual blessings are the pardon of sin, peace with God, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the continual influences of grace, the divine presence in the ordinances of religion, assistance in duties and temptations, comfort in affliction and its salutary fruits, hope in death, and a happy eternity. The incalculable value of these blessings should give them the first place in our prayers, and excite our fervent and importunate desires; and that man is destitute of the spirit of devotion, who looks upon them as secondary things, and is more remiss in asking them than in his petitions for temporal blessings. With respect to the latter, it may be observed, that we have no authority to seek great things for ourselves. On this subject, we are altogether disqualified to judge, and should keep a strict watch upon our desires, which are naturally immoderate, and would prompt us to solicit what it might not be for our good to possess, or for the glory of God to bestow. We ought to content ourselves with praying for a competent portion, and should leave its amount to be determined by Divine wisdom. We may pray for health, and the continuance of life, and other worldly enjoyments; but, at the same time, we should cultivate a submissive temper, which will acquiesce in the event without a murmur. Our Saviour has given us directions in the following words: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."‡ The first care of every man should be to obtain an interest in the salvation of Christ, and God will provide for his temporal wants. But our Saviour is not to be understood as forbidding us to pray for temporal blessings, either in this passage, or in the preceding verses, where he gives this admonition to his disciples, "Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."‖ The knowledge of our heavenly Father is not adduced as a reason why we should not pray for food and raiment, nor is this the design of the promise, that they shall be given, but the intention of both is to preserve his followers from anxiety, and fear, and distrust.

His injunctions in one place, must be explained consistently with those in another; and while he assures such as believe in him, that those things which are needful for the body shall not be withheld from them, he shows it to be their duty to make them the subject of their petitions to God, by teaching them to say, "Give us this day our daily bread."

* 2 Sam. vii. 25. † Phil. iv. 6, 7. ‡ Matt. vi. 33. ‖ Ib. 31, 32.

LECTURE XCIV.

ON PRAYER.

On Prayer for others.--Public Prayer.—Private Prayer.—Secret Prayer.—Ejaculatory Prayer.—Seasons of Prayer.—Forms of Prayer Objectionable.—Acceptable Prayer.—Answer to Prayer.

In the preceding lecture, I explained the nature of prayer, showed that it should be addressed to God alone, removed some objections against it, pointed out the rule, and specified the blessings for which we should present our petitions.

It is acknowledged that our prayers should not be confined to ourselves, but that there are others in whose behalf we should offer up our supplications to God. Who these are, we learn from the following words: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."* While it is evident from Scripture, and from the dictates of nature, that certain individuals, related to us by the ties of blood, and friendship, and religion, should have a particular place in our prayers, it appears from the words now quoted, that men of every nation, and of every degree, should be remembered by us when we draw near to the throne of grace. Our hearts, like our religion, should be expanded to embrace the whole family of mankind.

It is an inference from the command to pray for ourselves and others, that there is some efficacy in prayer. It is not only an expression of our desires, but a mean of obtaining the divine blessing. It is improper, therefore, to consider it as solely intended for our personal improvement, by awakening devout sentiments and feelings, and giving scope for the exercise of Christian tempers; there is a connexion between it and the end proposed, similar to the connexion between means and ends in the economy of nature. To encourage Christians to pray for their afflicted brethren, the Apostle James says, that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;"† and confirms the assertion by the example of Elijah, in answer to whose prayers, rain was first suspended and afterwards given. If it should be thought that their case was singular and miraculous, I would refer you to the words of our Saviour which are addressed to his disciples in general: "Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you."‡ The efficacy which we ascribe to prayer, does not resemble that which the heathens imagined to be in certain words, by the repetition of which the aid of invisible beings was obtained; nor does it arise from any merit in the duty, which imposes an obligation upon the Supreme Being to grant our request. It is the result of a free gracious constitution, by which God has engaged to bestow blessings upon those who ask them in faith. Strictly, the efficacy of prayer proceeds from the divine promise. We succeed in our supplications, because God has pledged himself to attend to them; but they must precede the exercise of his goodness, and no encouragement is given to us to expect any thing from him, if they are withheld. When he promises blessings he says, "For these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel."‖

The efficacy of prayer being ascertained, we are authorized to hope that our supplications will be useful to others as well as to ourselves, and are encouraged to intercede for them. We should be excited to

* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. † James v. 16. ‡ Matth. vii. 7. ‖ Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

the performance of the duty, by reflecting that they as well as we are dependent upon God; that they are subject to the same necessities, and infirmities, and distresses, which fall to our lot; that they have wants which he only can supply, and sins which he only can pardon; that they are actuated by the same desire for happiness which we feel, are in danger of eternal perdition, being by nature children of wrath, but are capable of heavenly bliss. If they pray for themselves, we should unite our interest with theirs, if we have any interest with the object of worship, that they may not fail of success; if, thoughtless and impious, they are living without God in the world, they are the more the objects of our pity, and we are the more loudly called to remember them because they are forgetful of themselves. Our prayers will thus be a becoming expression of love to our brethren of mankind; and among all the offices of kindness by which we should show our love, there is none more decisive, and more fitted to accomplish the end which we have in view, if we sincerely desire their welfare, than our earnest recommendation of them to the favour and care of the Father of mercies.

In behalf of others, we should ask the same temporal and spiritual blessings which we ask for ourselves. We should pray for the poor, that their wants may be supplied; for the afflicted, that they may be restored to health, and fitted by divine grace for life or death; for mourners, that they may be comforted; for the oppressed, that they may be delivered. We should pray for the young, that the seeds of piety may be sown in their hearts; for the old, that they may have wisdom to improve the short remainder of life, and exhibit a salutary example to their inferiors in years; for persons in the other stages of life, that they may perform the duties of their stations, and fulfil the purpose of their being. We should pray for those who are in sin, that they may be awakened and converted; and for those who are in a state of grace, that their faith may be strengthened, and that amidst difficulties and temptations, they may persevere to the end. We should pray for magistrates, that they may be just, and may rule over us in the fear of the Lord, and that under their protection we may enjoy all the rights and privileges which belong to us as men and Christians. We should pray for the ministers of religion, that they may be faithful and zealous, and that their labours may be crowned with success; and for the Christian people, that they may receive "with meekness the ingrafted seed of the word," and walk in the ordinances and commandments of the Lord. We should pray for the catholic church, that truth, and peace, and holiness may flourish in it; that its limits may be extended till it comprehend all the inhabited regions of the earth; and that the time may come when it shall be said to it, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord hath arisen upon thee." "Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side."*

One exception however is mentioned by the Apostle John: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it."† There is a degree of obscurity in these words; but the sin unto death most probably is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which alone is pronounced to be unpardonable. Its irremissible nature is evidently the reason why prayer is forbidden for the person who is guilty of it. It is extremely difficult to say in what it consists; and as Christians are divided in their sentiments on this subject, and it is impossible to determine when a person is chargeable with it,—if it was not confined, as some have thought, to the age of miracles,—the exception stated by John is practically no exception to us. We may pray for the greatest sinners, since, for aught we can tell, they are within the reach of mercy, and God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

Prayer may be distinguished into public, private, and secret.

Public prayer is that which is offered up in the church, or in any other place, where many are assembled to observe the ordinances of religion; and it appears from ancient records to have made a part of the service in the meetings of Christians from the earliest times. It is an acknowledgment of God by those who are present; an acknowledgment of their dependence upon him, of their expectations from him, of their desire for his grace, by which only the institutions of religion will be rendered effectual. On such occasions one necessarily speaks in the name of the rest, but all are understood to join in the petitions. It is not the minister alone who prays, it is the congregation which addresses God by his mouth; and every man should make the petitions his own by serious attention to them, and by stirring up the sentiments and affections of which they are expressive.

Private prayer is offered up in select associations, and particularly in families. Our Saviour has given an example in his prayers for his disciples; it is implied in the accounts of good men, which we find in the Scriptures; and it has been practised in all ages by the saints. The motive which excites a man to pray for himself, will lead him also to pray for his family, and with them. The relations in which they stand to one another give them a sort of individuality; as there are benefits which they all need, so there are mercies for which they should be all thankful; and interwoven as their interests are, the good which any of them obtains will be regarded as a common blessing. There is no fear of God in that house, in which the exercises of devotion are unknown; and it is worthy of observation, while the fact may seem strange, and is deeply to be lamented, that it is only among professed Christians that private worship is neglected, and that Mahometans and even Heathens act more consistently in carrying their religion into the bosom of their families, and the ordinary transactions of life.

Secret prayer is offered up by an individual in some place of retirement. Withdrawing from the world, and even from his most intimate friends, he converses with God alone. Seclusion is necessary to the collection of his thoughts, and the full unrestrained expression of his desires. He has wants which God alone can supply, and sorrows amidst which he alone can comfort him; he needs counsel to direct him in his personal conduct, and assistance under infirmities, the sense of which overwhelms him. Our Saviour has enjoined this duty upon us: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."* Secret prayer is so characteristic of a Christian, that we may pronounce him to be a mere pretender to the name who habitually neglects it, or contents himself with the occasional and formal performance of the duty. When Ananias seemed to doubt of the conversion of Paul, or at least hesitated to commit himself to a man of whom he had never heard before but in the character of a persecutor, our Lord gave him this sign, "Behold, he prayeth."† This will be the constant effect of the grace of God in the soul of man. It will awaken feelings which will irresistibly draw him to the throne of grace; and it will be as

* Is. lx. 1. 4. † 1 John v. 16.

* Matth. vi. 6. † Acts ix. 11.

impossible for him to live without prayer, as to live without his daily food. His graces would decline; his spirits would sink; his activity would abate: his joy would fail, as the fruits of the earth languish and wither in the want of rain. Prayer brings down the Divine blessing, with all its precious attendants, light, and peace, and strength, and hope.

I may add to these, ejaculatory prayer, or prayer not offered up on stated occasions, and in consequence of a previous purpose, but called forth by some unexpected circumstance; prayer prompted by some unforeseen perplexity and danger, by something afflicting which we see or hear, by an unlooked for deliverance, or by the sudden incursion of temptation. So natural, indeed, is it to have recourse to God under strong momentary impressions, that often they call upon him then, who at other times spend days and weeks without ever bowing a knee; and in this impulse of the mind have originated those exclamations or prayers, —that God would bless and preserve them,—which are so frequently in the mouths of the profane. The ejaculations of which I speak, are the effusions of a devout soul, which knows God, and loves him, and spontaneously flees to him as its refuge in the season of need. Assured that he is at hand, and that his ear is always open, it implores his favour, and commits itself to his care. Hence, we perceive of how much importance it is to cultivate a habit of piety, and to establish, if I may speak so, a familiar correspondence with him who compasses our path, and is acquainted with all our ways; for occasions will often occur when our own resources will prove insufficient, and no friend will be at hand to help, or when a friend could afford us no effectual aid. How happy, in such a case, is he who is not confounded and driven to despair, like the men of the world, but knows of an asylum to which he may run, and, by the prayer of faith, throws himself into the arms of almighty power and love!

The design of one of our Saviour's parables is to teach us, "that men should pray always, and not faint."* And an Apostle exhorts Christians to "pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."† Such passages cannot be misunderstood. Uninterrupted prayer is impossible; both mind and body would fail, if they were not relieved by intervals of repose, and a change of employment; and when devotion is prolonged beyond a reasonable time, varying, no doubt, according to the circumstances of individuals, it degenerates into bodily exercise, the mere labour of the lips. The business allotted to man in this world, comprehends a variety of duties which demand his attention, and will occupy a considerable portion of his time. Persecution first drove Christians into deserts, and from this accident arose the practice which afterwards led thousands to bury themselves in solitudes, and within the walls of a cloister, where their days were spent in the offices of piety. But it is superstition which has suggested the idea of superior sanctity, in thus abandoning the active duties of life; and had the voice of true religion been attended to, it would have brought them back to the world and prevailed upon them to enter into the common relations of society, and conscientiously to perform the duties arising from them. There are two tables of the law, and he only is a perfect Christian, who makes both the rule of his conduct. Nothing is meant by the exhortation to constant prayer, but that we should be frequently and regularly engaged in it; that we should pray at all the stated times; that we should comply with every call to it from Providence and our own feelings; that we should cultivate a habit of devotion, and lift up our hearts to God, when we are walking by the way, as well as when we are sitting in our houses; in company as well as in solitude; in the midst of business, as well as in the hours sacred to religion.

When Cornelius is said to have "prayed to God alway,"* the historian, by specifying the ninth hour, plainly signifies his meaning to be, that the centurion regularly engaged in prayer at the hours which were observed by the Jews.

By these remarks, I am naturally led to inquire what are the proper seasons of prayer. The holy Psalmist speaks, in one place, of engaging in devotional exercises seven times a-day;† in another, of morning, evening, and noon;‡ and again he says, that it is a good thing to show forth the loving kindness of God in the morning, and his faithfulness every night.‖ Religion ought not to be subjected to mechanical rules. Although it is enjoined by authority, yet its exercises must be spontaneous, or they will not be acceptable to God; and their multiplicity will not compensate for this defect. Yet it may be subjected to regulation, without interfering with its free and liberal spirit; and although no attempt should be made to impose restraints upon a person whose heart impels him to make frequent approaches to the throne of God, and no man can decide for another in a matter which his own feelings alone can determine; yet, we may say without hesitation, that there are two seasons which seem to be pointed out by the hand of nature itself as peculiarly suitable,—the morning and the evening. These, however, are not mentioned as the only seasons, but as times at which there is a particular call to the duty; which have been uniformly dedicated to a sacred use by the people of God; and which, therefore, should not be permitted to pass without a solemn address to Him who makes the sun know his time of rising and going down. There would be no overstraining in considering the law which commanded the Israelites to offer sacrifices in the morning and the evening, as intended to admonish us that we should begin and end the day with our sacrifices of prayer and praise.

In the morning we have awaked from a refreshing sleep, and life has been, as it were, restored to us with fresh vigour after the exhaustion caused by the labours of the preceding day. As our situation evidently calls for praises to the Author of our mercies, so it no less plainly points out the seasonableness of prayer, in the view of the events of the day upon which we have entered. There are duties to be performed, of great importance to ourselves and others, and connected with the glory of God, by a failure in which we shall incur guilt, and a train of consequences fatal to our peace and happiness. There are temptations to be encountered, arising from our intercourse with the world, against which our own vigilance is an insufficient defence, as they often assail us in an imperceptible manner, and our hearts are too prone to give them a favourable reception. We are exposed to danger at every step; and the calamities which befall men in circumstances that give no warning of evil, are a proof of our constant insecurity while we are not under the protection of Providence. These considerations show that the morning, when we are about to plunge into the busy perilous scene, is a season when we should solemnly commit ourselves, and those with whom we are connected, to the care of the Most High, who is near to them who call upon him in truth and sincerity. The man who, by the prayer of faith, has obtained the protection of the Almighty, may walk forth with humble confidence; not trusting in his prayers, but in Him to whom they were addressed, and assuring himself that no real evil shall be permitted to befall him. "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings

* Luke xviii. 1. † Eph. vi. 18.

* Acts x. 2. † Ps. cxix. 164. ‡ Ib. lv. 17.
‖ Ps. xcii. 2.

shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler."*

When the evening comes, there is a new call, not only to thanksgiving, but also to confession and supplication. If we review the transactions of the day, we shall not fail to perceive that we have been ungrateful for mercies, and negligent of duties; that we have offended in deed, and word, and, above all, in thought; and our only refuge from guilt and its consequences is in the Divine mercy, through Jesus Christ. We are about to lie down upon our beds, and to close our eyes in sleep, from which we may never awake. Is not this a season to implore the favour of that Being into whose immediate presence death will introduce us, and earnestly to entreat that we may be so prepared for the awful event, that we shall find ourselves in that blessed world on which the shades of night never descend? We are exposed to dangers by night as well as by day. The storm may arise, and bury us under the ruins of our houses. We may awake amidst flames from which it is impossible to escape. The midnight robber may break into our dwellings, and, to make sure of his prey, may deprive us of life. What security have we for our preservation but the providence of God? How unavailing would our precautions be, if the Lord himself did not keep the house! The fearlessness with which many lie down and rise up, is the effect of thoughtlessness and insensibility. In calculating chances, they appear to be in their favour, and the agency of God does not enter into their reckoning. But rational, solid, imperturbable peace, can be enjoyed only by the man who commits himself to the Shepherd of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps. "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."†

The question, Whether forms of prayer should be used in the worship of God? has given rise to much controversy, particularly between the Church of England and Dissenters. That they may be lawfully adopted by children, and others who are incapable of praying without assistance, we do not deny; but the subject of our present inquiry is, Whether a liturgy should be composed and enjoined upon the ministers of religion in their public administrations, and private Christians should be called upon to adhere to it in their families and closets? It is certain that no trace of this practice can be discovered in the Apostolical church; and it has been satisfactorily shown, that, although afterwards an order was established for the administration of the sacraments, and in different places the prayers might bear a considerable resemblance to one another in respect of their matter, prescribed forms were unknown for several centuries. When Justin Martyr is describing the worship of the second century, he says, "that the president or officiating minister offers up prayers and thanksgiving—*ὅση δυνάμις αὐτῷ*—according to his ability;"‡ an expression which would be unmeaning if he had read prayers from a book, as in this case no mental ability is required, and it is only necessary that he should use his eyes and his voice. Tertullian, in the same century, says, *Sine monitore quia de pectore oramus;* "We pray without a monitor, because we pray from the heart."‖

We object to forms of prayer, on the ground that there is no warrant for them in Scripture, and that they are not sanctioned by the example of the primitive church. We object to them, because they interfere with the office of the Holy Spirit, who is sent not only to inspire us with devotional sentiments, but also to suggest petitions; for this surely is implied in his "helping our infirmities," "and making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."* And if we dispassionately reflect upon the subject, it will appear more consonant to common sense, as well as to religion, that a person should be allowed to express the feelings and desires which spontaneously arise in his mind, than that he should be under the necessity of conforming them to a standard prepared by another. Would it not be preposterous to confine a son to a collection of written requests, from which he was never to deviate, in his addresses to his Father? This leads me to state farther, that we object to forms of prayer, because they cannot be adapted to the endlessly-diversified and ever-varying circumstances of the people of God, and must therefore prove a painful and injurious restraint upon the liberty of spirit which the divine promises encourage us to exercise. The minister must pray for nothing in public, nor the private Christian in his family and closet, however urgent is the demand for it, if he do not find it in his books. We object, once more, to forms of prayer, on account of their tendency to produce coldness and listlessness in the offices of religion. The human mind needs to be kept awake; and nothing is so much calculated to throw it into an inattentive, slumbering state, as the dulness of uniformity. The perpetual recurrence of the same sounds, the accustomed transitions from one subject to another, and the unvaried length of the service, must create a monotonous state of mind, if not an absence of thought, and convert prayer into a mere bodily exercise. The careless and unvaried manner in which prayers are often read in the English Church, proves too well that there is ground for this objection.

Yet the praise bestowed upon the liturgy of that church exceeds all bounds. It is "an excellent liturgy," an "admirable liturgy," an "incomparable liturgy," an "all but inspired liturgy." This extravagant language is quite in unison with the pretensions of that arrogant church, which like the Church of Rome, her prototype in pride, says, "I sit as a queen, and shall never see sorrow;" looking haughtily down upon us as hardly worthy to be accounted Christians, pronouncing our assemblies to be conventicles, and our ministers to be without ordination; and sometimes going so far as to exclude us from any interest in the promises, and leaving us to what is called the uncovenanted mercy of God. "Let another praise thee," says the wise man, "and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." If this wonderful liturgy be brought to the test of Scripture and sound reason, its vaunted excellence will vanish as a dream of fancy. To say nothing of the superstitious rites which it inculcates, and the false doctrine which it teaches, while it assumes in the burial service the salvation of all but self-murderers and excommunicated persons, and asserts the regeneration of all infants who are baptized, it has been justly charged with defects and redundancies; with omitting some important petitions, and unnecessarily repeating others; with dealing in generalities, without descending to particulars upon which the mind could fix; confessing, for example, sin in general, without specifying particular sins; with joining together petitions which have no kind of connexion; with prescribing prayers which contain, perhaps, only a single petition, expressed in two or three words, while the remaining space is filled up with a verbose introduction and conclusion. A serious objection is the shortness of the prayers. The longest is ended almost before you have time to bring your mind into a proper frame for joining in it; and some of them, consisting only of a single sentence, are finished almost as soon as they are begun. Besides the interruption which is thus given to devotional

* Ps. xci. 4. † Ib. iv. 8. ‡ Apolog. Secund. ‖ Apolog. - 30.

* Rom. viii. 26.

feelings, there is a want of dignity, and of sense, in a collection of what may be called shreds and fragments of prayers. The Lord's prayer is sometimes introduced out of place, or where no person can perceive any reason for using it; and it is brought forward so often, four or five times in the course of one service, as to have the appearance of vain repetition, and to give the idea of children conning a task, rather than of rational creatures worshipping God with the understanding. This is that boasted liturgy which has been extolled with bombastic praise, and, in comparison of which, the extemporaneous prayers of other churches are despised as vain babblings, or the incoherent effusions of enthusiasm. I have no hesitation in saying, that, in those churches, prayers far superior are offered up every sabbath; and I have frequently heard a prayer poured out by a man of God with the assistance of the Holy Ghost, which, in my judgment, was of more value than the whole of the liturgy. Let us be thankful that we stand in no need of its proffered assistance and that our devotion is not encumbered and impeded by any such human imposition.

From the observations which have been already made, we can be at no loss to determine what prayers are acceptable. It is evident that they are prayers addressed to God alone, and not to any created being, however highly exalted; that they are prayers offered up in the name of Christ, the only Mediator between God and man; and that they are prayers regulated by the Scriptures, and consisting solely in petitions for such blessings as God has promised to bestow. I may add, that in prayer the understanding must be exercised, or it will not be a rational service. If men repeat a number of words without knowing their meaning, or without reflecting upon their import; if they are ignorant or inattentive, they are guilty of mocking God, and instead of drawing down his blessing, will incur his displeasure. And here we may take notice of the practice of praying in an unknown tongue, when others are expected to join with us; a practice so contrary to common sense, that not the shadow of an argument can be alleged for it; and it rests solely upon the same authority which has instituted and corrupted the other ordinances of Christ, and established iniquity and absurdity by law. Had there been no liturgy in the Church of Rome, her ministers would pray in the language of the countries in which they officiate; but the forms of an infallible church are immutable, and her service is still performed in her ancient language, which has ceased to be vernacular for a thousand years. Prayers must be offered up in sincerity; for God regards not the words of the mouth, but the desires of the heart, and holds in abhorrence those who present to him hypocritical petitions. "This people draweth near to me with their mouths, and honoureth me with their lips; but their hearts are far from me."* They should be offered up with fervour of spirit, which is the fire that should kindle our sacrifices. We would not grant a favour to a person who asked it in so indifferent a manner, as to show that he was careless whether he obtained it or not. Now God, who knows our hearts, will dismiss those without an answer, whom he perceives to entertain no sense of the value of his blessings, and upon whom therefore they would be thrown away. This qualification of prayer is connected with importunity and perseverance; with importunity, which consists in pressing our suit, and using arguments to enforce it; with perseverance, which renews its supplications when disappointed, applies again and again, and does not desist till such an answer is obtained as was given to the Syrophenician woman, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."†

* Matth. xv. 8. † Ib. 28.

We have already seen that there is an efficacy in prayer, or that, in consequence of the appointment and promise of God, it is effectual to obtain temporal and spiritual blessings. There would be no motive to the duty if God were inexorable, or if such an order was established, that the good things which we need would come to us as a matter of course, without any effort on our part to procure them. Where there is such an order or constitution of things, all supplication is superseded. We do not pray that the sun may rise the next morning, because his return is secured by the ordinance of heaven, which will not be changed till the end of time; but we pray that we may again open our eyes to behold his light. The one event will certainly happen; the other will or will not take place according to the Divine determination. Prayer is offered up in the expectation of an answer; and when it is the prayer of faith, it is not presented in vain: "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers."* On this department of the subject, let me request your attention to the following observations.

First, God sometimes returns an immediate answer to the prayers of his people. In proof of this, many instances might be collected from the Scriptures. When the Israelites, in their flight from Egypt, were entangled by the Red Sea in front, the mountains on either hand, and the host of Pharaoh behind them, the Lord said to Moses, who, in this distress, was pouring out his prayer before him, Why standest thou, crying unto me? "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward;"† and immediately the waters were divided, and opened a passage to the opposite shore. When Elijah entreated God to determine, by a visible interposition, the controversy between himself and Baal, fire descended from heaven and consumed not only the sacrifice, but also the stones of the altar.‡ These are the words of God concerning his people: "They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."‖ The idea suggested, is the promptitude of the answer. While the petitions are yet upon their lips, and before they have had time to express all that was conceived in their hearts, he will send down from heaven the blessing which they desire. No sooner had the Apostles prayed that "the Lord would grant unto his servants, that with all boldness they might speak his word," than "the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,"§ who inspired them with heavenly eloquence and undaunted courage. God returns a speedy answer to the prayers of his people when the case is urgent, and delay would prove injurious; and while he thus puts honour upon the duty of prayer, and holds out encouragement to persevere in it, he furnishes a proof, by which all should be convinced, that there is profit in serving the Lord. When an audible voice had been returned from heaven to our Lord upon a certain occasion, he said, "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes."¶

Secondly, although God has heard the prayers of his people, yet he sometimes delays to answer them. Whatever conclusion their impatient minds may draw, their petitions are not rejected because the favour asked is not immediately conferred. David was convinced of this truth, as we see from his exercise recorded in the hundred and thirtieth psalm: "Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." Afterwards he adds, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

* 1 Pet. iii. 12. † Exod. xiv. 15. ‡ 1 Kings xviii. 38.
‖ Is. lxv. 23, 24 § Acts iv. 29. 31. ¶ John xii. 30.

My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning."* This is the language of expectation. He did not receive an immediate answer; but he did not sink into despondency. He looked for the blessing, as the sick man or the benighted traveller waits for the morning light, and supported himself by the faithful promises of God, which were the foundation of his hope: "Though the vision tarry," says the prophet, "wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry."† While God grants full liberty to his people to address him on every occasion, and promises that all their wants shall be supplied, he does not permit them to dictate to him with respect to the times and seasons of his interposition. His own wisdom, and not their anxiety, is the rule of his procedure. They are incompetent judges, as they know little more than their own feelings, and are unable to take a comprehensive view of the relations and consequences of the Divine dispensations. It is enough to be assured that God never turns away his ear from the prayer of faith, and that nothing truly good shall be withheld from those who fear him. Perhaps they are not yet in a proper state of mind for the reception of the blessings which they ask, not duly humbled by a sense of their unworthiness, and consequently not prepared to estimate them according to their value, and to feel all that warmth of gratitude which would lead to sincere and fervent thanksgiving. The delay may serve the salutary purpose of awakening their dormant piety, or of increasing its vigour and activity. It will teach them to live by faith, to support themselves by dependence upon his promises, to serve him in hope, instead of always being impelled by the actual experience of his goodness. It will lead their thoughts more to God, and render their supplications more earnest and importunate; and such is the constitution of human nature, that mercies which have been long sought, and sometimes despaired of, but at last obtained, acquire in our eyes a double value, and are enjoyed with a keener relish. For these and other reasons, there is sometimes a considerable interval between the prayer and the answer, but none of those who wait upon God shall be ashamed. The prayer was heard when it was presented; it was remembered, although the saint might have been tempted to exclaim, 'The Lord hath forgotten me;' and when the proper season has arrived, a testimony of the Divine favour is given to convince them, that blessed are they who wait upon the Lord.

Thirdly, The prayer of faith is heard even when the blessing sought is withheld, but another more expedient is bestowed. When the disciples, at their last meeting with our Saviour, said to him, "Lord, wilt thou, at this time, restore the kingdom to Israel?" he did not return an answer for a reason which is assigned in the following words: "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power."‡ But, although he refused to gratify their curiosity on this subject, yet he promised them what was of far greater value than the information which they were anxious to obtain: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." He would give them the Spirit, to teach them all mysteries, and all necessary knowledge. When the Apostle Paul thrice entreated the Lord, that the messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him, might be removed, he obtained only this answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."‖ He was not relieved from his present distress, but he was assured of grace to support him. God reserves to himself the power of judging what answer he shall return to the prayers of his people; and it is a power in which they should cheerfully acquiesce, as it will be always exercised for their best interests. From their imperfect knowledge, they may commit mistakes with respect to the object of their requests; but their petitions are pleasing to him, as expressions of their faith, and hope, and humble desires; and he therefore bestows in return a blessing more suitable to their circumstances and conducive to their good, which they afterwards perceive to be preferable to that which was selected by themselves.

I observe, in the last place, that God hears the prayers of his people, even when he does not return any direct answer to them. A Christian may pray, as he is bound in duty, for the recovery of a friend who is sick, and yet his friend may die; or he may pray for the conversion of particular persons, who may never come to the knowledge of the truth. In such cases a distinction should be made, and we must say, that, although the prayers are not heard, so far as this implies the obtaining of an answer, yet they are acceptable to God, as proceeding from a holy heart, and being conformable to the general rule of Scripture. The exercise of grace may be pleasing to God, although the occasion of its exercise is a mistake. The love which a saint bears to a hypocrite, whom, in charity, he supposes to be a saint, is the fulfilment of the law, and receives the Divine approbation as well as any other duty. The unworthiness of the object does not destroy its value, because his real character is unknown, and the formal reason of it is his profession of piety. Notwithstanding the error of those members of the Church at Rome, who, not considering that the ceremonial law was abolished, observed a distinction of days and meats from a principle of conscience, we are assured by Paul that the Lord received them.* We may therefore conclude that, although the people of God should, in particular circumstances, present their petitions for favours which his wisdom does not judge it proper to bestow, yet he is pleased with their prayers, because they are founded on the general promises of Scripture. Such prayers ought not to be considered as lost. They are among the works of faith, and labours of love, which God will not forget.

The prayer of faith is always heard. It brings down, sooner or later, the specific blessing, or another of equal value; and although no direct answer should be returned, it is still a sacrifice pleasing to God, through Jesus Christ. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need."†

LECTURE XCV.

ON PRAYER.

The Lord's Prayer.—Its use as a Form and as a Pattern.—Is it a Compilation?—Its Parts.—Commentary upon it.—Dispute Respecting the Genuineness of the Doxology.

In the course of his sermon on the mount, our Saviour said to his disciples, "After this manner pray ye. Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."‡ The same prayer in substance occurs in the gospel of Luke,‖ but there are some verbal differences, and the doxology is omitted. On this account, and because it was

* Ps. cxxx. 2, 5, 6. † Hab. ii. 3. ‡ Acts i. 6, 7.
‖ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

* Rom. xiv. 3. † Heb. iv. 16. ‡ Matt. vi. 9—13.
‖ Luke xi. 2—4.

pronounced by the Lord the second time, in answer to the request of one of his disciples, who said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples," Origen, in his treatise, περι ευχης, thinks that they should be considered as different prayers. This, however, is too nice a distinction; and it is not easy to see on what it is founded, as with the alteration of a word or two, all the petitions are exactly the same. If you should inquire how this disciple came to ask Christ to teach them to pray, although he had taught them already, the same Father will tell you, that perhaps he was not present when it was first delivered, or he had forgotten what was said.

It has been asked, whether this prayer was intended to be a form, or pattern; and the question has given rise to various opinions, and to arguments for and against. Those who maintain that it is only a pattern, besides other reasons, allege the words in Matthew, "After this manner, pray ye;" but their criticism is founded on the English version. The original word ουτως, may be rendered, "after this manner," but also more simply, "thus," and is used in Scripture, in reference to the identical words which were spoken. They also forget that in Luke, our Lord said without any qualifying term, "When ye pray, say." If it were only meant, that the Lord did not intend to confine them to this prayer, to enjoin the constant unaltered use of it, to prohibit prayer in any other terms, we should certainly concur with them; but it is not a little surprising to find some persons discovering an anxiety to prove, that we should cautiously avoid the words which were dictated by the Son of God himself, and should apply them to no other purpose, but as a guide in prayers of our own composition. It has the appearance of impiety, or, to use a softer term, of very great folly; and it can be accounted for only on the principle which directs the conduct of weak-minded men, that of guarding against one extreme by running into another. They imagine that they cannot remove to too great a distance from any thing which they conceive to be wrong, and if their antagonist should go to the east, they know of no better way of testifying their disapprobation than by walking in all haste to the west. There is no doubt that in some churches, and particularly the Church of England, the Lord's prayer is improperly used, being introduced into the service unseasonably, and repeated over and over, as if there were supposed to be some magical virtue in the words. But this is no reason why others should treat it, as Hezekiah did the brazen serpent, which he broke in pieces, because it had been made the object of idolatrous worship. It is not profaned by man's abuse; it is still the best and most comprehensive of all prayers; and when offered up with suitable sentiments and affections, is acceptable to our Father in heaven. Who is the presumptuous man who dares to think, that he can find more proper words to express the desires of his heart? I acknowledge, at the same time, that it was chiefly intended to be a pattern; that it is only a summary of the blessings for which we should pray; and that the Scriptures show, and our own hearts dictate, that in our addresses to God, it is necessary to be more full and particular. But this concession does not in any degree derogate from its excellence. As a pattern, it is unavoidably concise; and its design was not to enter into a minute detail, but to furnish us with hints which we might improve, with the assistance of the other parts of the word of God. Thus we unite the two contending opinions, which never would have been disjoined had it not been for ignorant zeal. The Lord's prayer is both a form and a pattern.

It is the opinion of many learned men, that this prayer is not an original composition, but a compilation. They affirm that it was not dictated by our Saviour in the exercise of his own wisdom, and that he only displayed judgment in selecting it from the prayers which were then current among the Jews. Accordingly, quotations have been given from their different books, in which we find the same or nearly the same expressions, which are here brought together.* It has been said, that it is contrary to all probability, that such a correspondence of words and phrases should have happened by chance; and hence that either of these suppositions must be made, that the Jews have transferred those things from the gospel to the use of the Synagogue, or that Christ borrowed them from the Jews, and consecrated them for the use of his disciples. Either supposition, it is added, will redound to the honour of our Saviour. If the Jews, the avowed enemies of the Gospel, have adopted this prayer from it, they show their high opinion of its wisdom and piety, which has led them to receive it into their liturgy, notwithstanding their violent prejudices against its Author. But it is incredible that they would have yielded so far, and it is more reasonable to believe that our Lord, in accommodation to them, converted to his own purpose these scattered fragments of devotion, these golden remains of ancient piety. There is one point, however, which it is necessary previously to ascertain, whether the books in which the component parts of this prayer are found, are more ancient than the days of our Saviour. If, as I presume, they are all of a posterior date, the idea that our Saviour borrowed from the Jews, rests on slender grounds, as we have no certainty that the expressions which we now find in their books were then known to them. In estimating probabilities, men are often influenced by prior associations which have a powerful effect upon their judgment; and hence what seems probable to one person, may appear in a different light to another. I confess that I cannot reconcile the supposition, that our Lord was indebted to any human help in instructing his disciples, with the idea which I entertain of the dignity of his character, as the great Prophet, whose doctrine was from heaven, and not from men; and nothing should induce me to assent to it, but evidence much stronger than has yet been produced. In this as in similar cases, the claim of originality should be decided by the question of priority. We know *when* our Lord delivered this prayer to his disciples; but we have no certain information respecting the time when the corresponding expressions were adopted by the Jews. It is a conjecture of a learned man, that they came into use among them, by means of such of the Judaizing Christians as apostatized, who having been taught this prayer, communicated it to their brethren. As it contains no reference to Jesus as the Messiah, and there is no part of it which does not accord with their own Scriptures, as understood by themselves, it would the more readily meet with a favourable reception. If it should still seem incredible, that the Jews should have ever been persuaded to give the sanction of their approbation to any thing, of which a person so obnoxious as Jesus of Nazareth was the Author, I would remind you that the case is not without a parallel, for never was man more hated by Papists than Calvin, and the object of more violent abuse, and yet it is known that some of their writers have made free use of his works in the composition of their own.

The Lord's prayer consists of three parts,—an address to God in the character of our Father, a number of petitions, and a doxology. I intend to give you a short commentary upon it in the subsequent part of this lecture.

Our Saviour directs us to begin with addressing

* Vide Witsii Exercit. in Orat. Dom. vi. § 32—38.

God in the character of our Father: "Our Father which art in heaven." Now, God may be called our Father on two accounts; first, because he is the Author of our being; and, secondly, because by his grace he has adopted us into his family. In the first respect, he is the Father of the whole human race; and hence the Prophet asks, "Have we not all one Father, and hath not God created us?"* Creation and generation are indeed two things totally different, and it is upon the latter that the paternal relation is founded; but they agree in the general idea of the communication of life, and hence God is called our Father, although he did not beget, but created us. In the second respect, he is the Father of believers alone, or of those who have been made his children by faith in Christ Jesus; and it is primarily, although not exclusively, in this relation that we should contemplate him when we offer up our prayers. His greatness would overawe us, and the reflection that he gave us existence, would not relieve us from our fears, conscious as we are that we have been ungrateful for the gift, and have degraded our nature, which was originally adorned with his image; but the grace, and condescension, and tender pity, which the new character of Father implies, inspire us with hope, and embolden us to approach to his throne, and to present our requests.—The words, "In heaven," do not refer to the local residence of the Deity. If he were in heaven as created beings are in a place, the heavens would be greater in extent than he, and consequently he would be limited. Against the mistake into which the sound of the words might lead an ignorant person, it is not necessary to put those on their guard who have read in the Scriptures the sublime descriptions of the immensity of the Divine essence; and all that is incumbent upon us is, to inquire for what reason the infinite Creator is represented as in heaven. The common answer is the just one; that, as there must be a region of the universe in which he confers their full reward upon his holy creatures, he is said to be in it, because he there gives the highest manifestations of his goodness and glory. As it is a natural thought that this place is elevated above this terrestrial and the visible creation, we point upwards when we are speaking of the habitation of the Divinity, as our Saviour lifted up his eyes when he prayed, acting on that occasion under the influence of the ideas and feelings of a man.—This preliminary address is an appropriate introduction to the prayer which follows; for the contemplation of God as our Father, will give us an interest in his glory, which is the subject of the first petition, and will encourage us to ask the blessings which are mentioned in the other petitions.

The first petition is, "Hallowed," or sanctified, "be thy name;" in which the meaning of the two words, *name* and *sanctify*, must be ascertained. A name properly signifies the discriminative appellation of an individual; and in this sense our Father in heaven has different names, as Jehovah, God, Lord, &c. But the term is used in other significations, and particularly, I apprehend, denotes on some occasions God himself. As the Jews were wont to call him the Name of the heavens, and the Name, absolutely; so, when the Scripture calls us to give thanks to his name, it evidently calls us to give thanks to himself. In the present case, it is frequently explained to be, every thing whereby God makes himself known; but then the prayer, that every thing whereby he makes himself known may be sanctified or glorified, is not very intelligible. I think it therefore preferable, to consider the name of God in this place as signifying God himself, the idea of his being manifested to his creatures being necessarily implied in the petition. The word ἁγιάζειν, signifies to *make holy*; but this cannot be its meaning here; for we should either utter words to which we attached no idea, or express a sentiment full of impiety and blasphemy, if we prayed that God might be made holy. Ἁγιάζειν, signifies also *to separate from a common to a peculiar use*, and hence, also, to treat any thing with reverence as sacred. Now, as a person who is honoured is distinguished or separated from other persons, is the object of respect and homage, to sanctify, comes to be equivalent to glorify. The true sense, therefore, of the petition before us is, let God be glorified. The two words evidently convey the same meaning in the following passage: "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified."* The petition, therefore, may be understood as a prayer that God would glorify himself, and that he would enable us and others to glorify him.

God has already glorified himself in the works of creation; and he continues to glorify himself in his dispensations of providence and grace. He glorifies himself when he performs such works as afford bright and impressive manifestations of his power, wisdom, goodness, justice, and holiness. To mention only one instance,—he is said to honour himself by executing vengeance upon sinners, whose daring crimes seemed to call for his interposition. The words lately quoted were spoken immediately after the death of Nadab and Abihu, who were destroyed by lightning from the oracle, because, in a state of intoxication as it would seem, they had offered strange fire in the sanctuary. In reference to the doom of Pharoah and his army, who were drowned in the Red Sea, he said, "I will get me honour upon Pharoah, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."† We therefore, pray that God would give such manifestations of his glory in the course of events, as shall make man know that "he whose name alone is JEHOVAH, is the Most High God over all the earth."

If it is our duty to pray that God would glorify himself, it is undoubtedly incumbent upon us to pray also that we may be disposed and enabled to concur in this design, which is the ultimate end of our creation and redemption. We hallow his name, when we observe, and admire, and acknowledge the displays of his perfections in nature, and providence, and grace; when we elevate our minds and hearts to him, as the greatest, the holiest, the wisest, the best of all beings; when we worship him according to his own institution; when we speak to the honour of his character and dispensations, and vindicate them from the accusations of impiety, and when we cheerfully obey the precepts which prescribe the objects and the extent of our duty. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."‡ The Greek commentator Theophylact, thus briefly explains the petition: "Let thy name be sanctified; that is, make us holy, that thou mayest be glorified on our account. For as God is blasphemed, so he is sanctified, on my account; that is, is glorified as holy."

"Thy kingdom come." God, who is the Creator, is also the Lord of the universe, and his kingdom of providence rules over all, and admits of no increase of power and dominion. The petition has no reference to it, because it would be absurd to pray that that may come, which is come already. But there is a kingdom which was announced in the Old Testament as future, and concerning which we have the following prophecy of Daniel: "In the days of these kings," that is, before the four great monarchies were ended, "the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other

* Mal. ii. 10.

* Lev. x. 3. † Exod. xiv. 17. ‡ John xv. 8.

people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."* In the New Testament it is called the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of God; and this name is given to the dispensation of grace under the Messiah, which is carried on by the gospel and the institutions of our Saviour, and by the operations of the Holy Ghost. It also is already come. It commenced on the day of Pentecost, and has continued, amidst various vicissitudes, to the present hour; but, in its most prosperous state, it never was established except over a small portion of the earth. Besides, almost from the beginning, its strength has been impaired by internal divisions, and its glory obscured by manifold corruptions; and in not a few places it subsists only in name, and what is called the kingdom of Christ, should rather be considered as a province of the kingdom of darkness.

At the time when our Lord taught this prayer to his disciples, their notions of his kingdom were very imperfect; but he called upon them to pray for the propagation of his religion in the world, the conversion of Jews and Gentiles, and the universal reign of righteousness and truth. There are still valid reasons for continuing to present this petition. We do not yet see all things put under Christ. A great part of the world is subject to the dominion of his adversary, whom he was manifested to destroy. Heathenism spreads its deepest shades over many a wide and populous region; Mahometanism tramples on the cross in countries where his religion once flourished; Popery has degraded it into a profligate and contemptible superstition; and among those who profess a purer faith, there are comparatively few who honour him with the homage of their hearts. Ought we not, then, to pray that his kingdom may come? We are authorized by prophecy to look for a more glorious dispensation, when "the Spirit shall be poured out from on high, and the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;" for a time "when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." As the bold and magnificent language of prophecy may require a cautious and sober interpretation, it is uncertain whether the true religion will ever be strictly universal; and some obscure hints render it doubtful: but if the whole human race should, at a future period, be the faithful subjects of Christ, it would then be their duty, not to pray for the coming of his kingdom, but to rejoice because it had come. It should be remembered, that the event to which we should look forward, is not the general prevalence of a profession of his religion, but a cordial acceptance of it, accompanied with subjection to his laws and institutions; and consequently, that we ought to pray for the exertion of Divine power, by which only this great spiritual revolution will be effected. The kingdom of God comes when it is established in the heart.

Some have understood the kingdom to mean the second coming of Christ. "He who has a bold or assured conscience," says Theophylact, "will wish the resurrection and judgment to come." It is the character of believers, that they are looking for and hastening to the coming of the Lord; and when their faith is strong, they will say with the beloved disciple, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." I presume, however, that we have given the true sense of the petition, when we have explained it as a prayer for the enlargement and prosperity of the Church.

The petition which is next in order, is closely connected with the coming of the kingdom of God; for when the gospel, by which it is advanced, is accompanied with Divine power, men are disposed and enabled to do the will of God. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Divines speak of the secret and the revealed will of God; but with the former we have nothing to do, and this petition respects the latter alone. It is his will made known to us as the rule of our conduct, by positive precepts, and by the dispensations of Providence. It is the duty of every man to submit to the appointments of heaven, to bear trials without murmuring, to be content with his condition; it is his duty to pay a sacred regard to all the commands of his Maker, and to perform with fidelity the various offices of piety, justice, and charity. There are several important ideas suggested by this petition:—that the will of God is the reason of obedience, or the foundation of morality; that it is a law to all men without exception; that it should be carefully studied by us, and kept constantly in view as the standard of our actions; that it is only by Divine assistance that we shall be enabled to obey it; and, that we should pray for grace to others as well as ourselves. The notion, that men possess a natural power to obey, as Pelagians affirm, or that they have all received sufficient grace, is contradictory to this petition, which manifestly supposes that we have no such power, and must therefore ask it from God.

In presenting this petition, we are directed to have in our eye the example of obedience exhibited by the inhabitants of heaven, or the angels of God, concerning whom it is said, that "they do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word."* We cannot, indeed, hope to attain to equal perfection, but it should be our constant aim, and every endeavour should be used to make the nearest approach to it. The utmost which we can hope in the present state, is the perfection of sincerity, consisting in integrity of heart, and leading us to esteem the Divine precepts concerning all things to be right. If we are sincere, our obedience will resemble that of the angels in promptitude and cheerfulness. Not hesitating from fear of the consequences, nor retarded by the love of ease, and the interference of other demands, we will immediately and willingly comply with the calls of duty, like those blessed spirits, who, as soon as the command is given, fly, like the lightning, from heaven to earth, to execute his orders.

The next petition respects our temporal affairs: "Give us this day our daily bread." The word translated *bread*, is used both in Greek and in Hebrew, in its proper signification; but it is also put, by a figure, for the whole of our temporal provision, because bread is called in Scripture the staff of life, and among the eastern nations was a principal article of food. It is altogether fanciful to say,—what you have no doubt heard,—that the people of God should be content if they have only bread and water, because these only are contained in the promise, "His bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure."† Undoubtedly, they should be pleased with the scantiest portion which may be assigned to them; but they have better reasons for contentment than this or any similar promise. The interpretation may be called pious; but it is entitled to no other praise, and betrays ignorance of the rules according to which Scripture should be explained. Bread stands as a part for the whole, and denotes all the necessaries of life; and our Church gives a more rational view of the petition, when it represents it as teaching us, to ask not a bare subsistence, but "a competent portion."

The true sense of the word translated *daily*, it is more difficult to settle. The Greek term is επιουσιος, concerning which Origen observes, that it was not used by either the learned or the vulgar, and seems to have been formed by the Evangelists. There is, therefore, no resource left but etymology, which has guided Jerome in his translation, who calls it in Matthew *super-substantialis*, but in Luke *quotidianus*. Now,

* Dan. ii. 44.

* Ps. ciii. 20.

† Is. xxxiii. 16.

super-substantialis is a very literal version of επιουσιος, which is compounded of επι, *upon*, and ουσια, *essence* or *substance*. But such versions are the result of ignorance, and prove that the translator understands only the component parts of a word, but not the word itself. *Super-substantialis* is as unintelligible as επιουσιος, although it has been supposed to mean the bread of the Eucharist, a supposition utterly absurd. Some have thought that it is derived from the verb επειμι, signifies to *remain*, to *be after*; and that αρτος επιουσιος is our *future bread*, the bread of to-morrow. But the petition thus understood would sound harshly, "Give us this day," or, as in Luke, "Give us day by day the bread of the next day;" and seems not to be consistent with trust in God, and with our Saviour's exhortation not to take thought for the morrow. The word is not so explained by any of the ancients; and this sense is rejected by Origen who mentions it only as a sense which might occur to some of his readers. Αρτος επιουσιος is explained by Chrysostom and others, who were the most competent judges, to be *bread which passes into the essence* or *substance of our bodies*, bread which is sufficient for the preservation of our bodily substance; and they understand by it, not the luxuries and superfluities of life, but those things which are necessary for its support.*

We are forbidden to seek high things, and if we are duly influenced by the glorious discoveries of the Gospel, we will feel a great degree of indifference to the enjoyments and splendours of the world. But daily bread is not to be confined to those things which are usually called the necessaries of life. Even the phrase, the necessaries of life, does not convey a definite idea, as the circumstances of individuals are so much diversified, and what is sufficient for one would be totally inadequate to the wants of another. God, who has placed man in different situations, has himself rendered a larger share of worldly good things necessary to a man of rank, for example, than to an obscure person, to the father of a numerous family than to him who is childless. Our Saviour has in his wisdom employed a general expression, which admits of considerable latitude of application, and authorises us to pray for sufficient bread, for a competent portion, for all that our station requires. The prayer of Agur will serve as a model, and will show us, that, although we should not presume to dictate to God, yet there are two extremes from which we may pray to be preserved, as there is danger to be apprehended from both. "Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."†

It is almost unnecessary to add, that this prayer does not supersede the use of means; for it is only in conforming to the established order of providence, that we ought to expect it to be answered. The prayer imports that our temporal blessings come from God, in whatever channel they may be communicated; that without his blessing our industry and foresight will prove unavailing; and our dependence upon him is constant: and hence we are directed to present this petition, not at distant intervals, but from day to day. Even the rich man who thinks that he has goods laid up for many years, should ask his daily bread from God; for when it is in his hand, providence could snatch it from him, and scatter in an hour his wealth to the winds.

In the next petition we pray for the remission of sin: "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Our debts are our sins, and accordingly the latter word is used when the prayer is repeated in Luke. They are called our debts, because they formally consist in the non-payment of the obedience which we owed to God, or as some think, because the sinner has a debt of punishment to pay to divine justice. If our debts are our offences against God, it follows that our debtors are not those who owe us money, but those who have injured us in word and deed, and from whom we might think ourselves entitled to demand satisfaction.

It is unnecessary to inquire what is implied in the forgiving of our debts, as this important subject was explained in its proper place; and remission is well known to consist in our absolution from the sentence of condemnation pronounced upon us for our sins. Nor is there any occasion at present for showing that God alone can forgive sin, and that although no mention is made of the atonement of Christ, it must be understood to be referred to; agreeably to the uniform doctrine of Scripture, that it is solely for his sake that God bestows this blessing upon us. Waiving these points as not now demanding our attention, let us consider the subjoined condition or qualification, as it seems to be, with which our Lord has connected this petition: "As we forgive our debtors." And certainly no small difficulty here presents itself to those who hold the doctrine of justification by grace without any conditions. It does not appear easy to reconcile with that doctrine, this petition as expressed in Matthew, and still more strongly in Luke: "For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." Various attempts have been made to point out their harmony; but some of them have not been successful.

It has been said that our forgiving others is an evidence of the grace of God towards us, from which it appears, that we are not given up to our sinful affections, and his Spirit has not utterly departed from us, and that hence we may hope for new displays of his grace. It has also been said that our forgiving others must precede the sense of our own forgiveness, and that we cannot expect to experience joy and peace, if we do not exercise charity towards our brethren. But this reasoning shifts the state of the question, and supposes the person in whom this qualification is required, to have been already forgiven. It is a better solution of the difficulty, to represent the petition as containing an argument from the less to the greater, which may be thus stated:—'Our Father in heaven, if we whose goodness is so limited are so affected towards others as not unwillingly to pardon their offences, with how much confidence can we ask the same thing to ourselves from thee, whose benignity has neither measure nor bounds!' Our Lord reasons in a similar manner: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"*

I have long thought that the difficulty may be more satisfactorily removed in a different way. There are two kinds of pardon,—legal pardon, and fatherly pardon; of which the one consists in the repeal of the curse of the law, or the sentence of condemnation; and the other, in the removal of the chastisements to which the children of God are subjected for their offences. The first is obtained by faith alone, without works, but the second is suspended upon conditions, —repentance, confession, prayer, and the performance of duty. Our Lord taught this prayer to his disciples, who were already in a state of grace; and it begins with an address to God as our Father, which supposes us to stand in the relation of children to him. It is the prayer of a believer, who, having been freely forgiven when he was justified, has still to ask the par-

* Vide Wits, in Symbolum Exercit. xi. *de Pane Quotidiano*, § 10.

† Prov. xxx. 7—9.

* Luke xi. 11.

don of his daily offences. Now, that he may recover a comfortable sense of the love of God, and again enjoy the light of his countenance, it is necessary that he should be in a proper disposition of mind, and particularly that he should be in a state of charity towards his brethren of mankind, and especially towards those who have offended him. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* By subjoining this qualification to the petition, our Lord reminds his disciples of the necessity of being placable and merciful, and encourages them, when they are conscious of this temper, to expect mercy from God. The petition points out the order, according to which God dispenses favours to his people. He will withdraw his chastening hand when they return to a sense of their duty. When they forgive others, he will forgive them.

If we take this view of the subject, the difficulty is removed. It is not the condition of their original pardon which is prescribed, but of the forgiveness of their subsequent failings and imperfections.

We cannot pray in sincerity for the pardon of sin, without feeling an abhorrence of it, and forming a resolution henceforth to renounce it. Our Saviour has therefore taught us to say in the next place, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Temptation signifies any thing which entices us to sin. It would be foreign to our present design, to inquire what are the various sources of temptation; but it is necessary to ascertain what is implied in not leading us into it. The expression has rather a strange sound, as it occurs in an address to God, and it seems to import that God might be actively concerned in tempting us, in direct contradiction to the following words: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."† It is certain that God may give permission to wicked spirits and bad men to tempt us, for there is no doubt that he could restrain them; that, in the course of his providence, he may place us in circumstances which have a tendency to stimulate our corrupt desires and passions; and that he may leave us to act according to the inclinations of our hearts. Thus far we may conceive him to lead us into temptation; but to suppose him to exert any direct influence to excite us to comply with it, would be to represent him as the author of sin. The words before us, and all similar expressions, ought to be explained consistently with the perfect purity of the Divine nature; and we should avoid all those metaphysical speculations concerning the agency of God in the actions of his creatures, which bewilder the mind, and lead us so far, that we can only escape the impious conclusion by retracting our own reasonings, and resting, where we should have always rested, in the incontrovertible truth, that "God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all." This petition, then, is expressive of two things; first, of a request, founded on an humble sense of our weakness and liability to err, that God would keep temptation at a distance from us; and, secondly, of a request that, if for wise reasons he shall be pleased to expose us to it, he would assist and strengthen us in the evil hour. It is a direct acknowledgment of our inability to preserve ourselves. Accordingly, we are directed farther to say, "Deliver us from evil;" signifying, that our own wisdom and resolution are insufficient, and that our only resource is the power of God. Evil is generally understood to be sin; but in the original, the article is prefixed to it—ρυσαι ἡμας απο του πονηρου; which may be translated, *from the evil one.* It was generally so explained by the Fathers. The character of the evil one is justly given to the apostate spirit who was the first transgressor, and is continually soliciting others to transgress; and the description of him "as a roaring lion, that goes about seeking whom he may devour,"* shows the danger which we have reason to dread from him, and the urgent necessity of prayer that we may be preserved from his power. When Christians are exhorted to put on the whole armour of God,—the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit,—it is added, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."†

The prayer is concluded with this doxology: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen." It may be considered, not only as an ascription of praise to God, but as containing reasons or motives to encourage us to offer up the preceding petitions. The kingdom belongs to God; who is the Sovereign of the universe, and, having all things at his disposal, can bestow the blessings which we ask. The power belongs to him; and therefore no obstacle can prevent the accomplishment of his gracious designs. The glory belongs to him; and therefore we infer that he will grant our requests, because in the dispensations of his providence and grace his name will be glorified. To the whole prayer, the Hebrew word "Amen" is subjoined, which, in this connexion, is expressive of our desire, and of our confidence that we shall be heard.

It is proper to observe, that the genuineness of the doxology has been called in question by many learned men, and that it is supposed to be an interpolation transferred into the text from the ancient liturgies, in which it was used after the prayer was recited. It is remarked, that it is wanting in Luke, where this prayer is repeated, only with some unimportant alterations; but if the doxology is interpolated in Matthew, it is not easy to conceive why it has been left out in Luke, as it would have been as easy to introduce it in the one place as in the other. Its presence in the former Gospel, and its absence in the latter, seem rather to prove it to be genuine. It is not found in many manuscripts, in the writings of some of the Greek Fathers even when they professedly explain the Lord's Prayer, in several ancient versions, and in the Fathers of the Latin Church. On the other hand, there are several ancient versions in which it is found, and Greek and Latin writers by whom it is quoted and commented upon; and it is asserted also, that it appears in many manuscripts some of which are of high antiquity. Griesbach has ejected it from the text; but, although his authority is great, the discussions of some learned men have made some abatement from it, and shown us that we ought not implicitly to bow to his decisions. I do not pretend to determine a question, with respect to which the most eminent critics are divided in sentiment.

In this formulary, we have all the constituent parts of prayer. It begins and ends with adoration and thanksgiving; and it contains petitions for temporal and spiritual blessings, some of which obviously imply confession of our sinfulness and weakness. It is an admirable guide to us in our devotions; and prayers conformable to this pattern are acceptable to God, when they flow from a heart purified by faith. It is entitled to the highest respect, as a form to be occasionally used in public and private; and to lay piety out of the question, we could not say much for the modesty of the man who should presume to think that any prayer which he could compose would be better. Our Directory for Public Worship says, "Be-

* Matth. vi. 14, 15. † James i. 13.

* 1 Pet. v. 8. † Eph. vi. 18.

cause the prayer which Christ taught his disciples is not only a pattern of prayer, but itself a most comprehensive prayer, we recommend it also to be used in the prayers of the church.

LECTURE XCVI.

ON THE CHURCH.

Different Meanings of the Term, Church.—Import of the Distinctions into the Visible and Invisible, Militant and Triumphant Church.—The Design of the Church.—The Qualification of its Members; Baptism, Knowledge, Faith, and a Credible Profession.—The Unity, Universality, Perpetuity, and Infallibility of the True Church.

THE design of God in the various dispensations of religion, has been to establish and uphold a society of a singular character, separated from the world, dedicated to his service, and distinguished by the high privileges conferred upon the members. As this society is the object of his special care, and it is in it that revelation is preserved, the ordinances of the true religion are administered, and the blessings of salvation are enjoyed, it is entitled to particular attention.

The name by which it is known among us is the Church, and this term is used as equivalent to the Hebrew word קהל, and the Greek word εκκλησια. As קהל signifies a congregation, or a number of persons gathered together, so this is the import of εκκλησια, which denoted, among the Greeks, an assembly of the people convoked by lawful authority. Accordingly, the former word is frequently translated by the latter in the Septuagint, and occurs likewise as its substitute in the New Testament. In the fortieth psalm, the Messiah says, "I have declared thy righteousness in the great congregation;"—בקהל רב—and the passage is thus quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Εν μεσῳ εκκλησιας ὑμνησω σε; "In the midst of the church I will sing praise to thee."* The Septuagint here employs the word συναγωγη.†

The word εκκλησια bears a variety of senses, which either are found in Scripture, or have been since attached to it in the common language of Christians. It is not certain that it any where signifies, in the New Testament, the place of meeting for the worship of God, (see 1 Cor. xi. 22.) although it very early received this meaning by *metonymy*, according to which the thing containing is called by the name of that which it contains; and, in imitation of the ancients, we give the designation of churches to those houses in which Christians hold their religious assemblies. As it would serve no purpose to inquire whether there were any houses so denominated in the days of the Apostles, I proceed to observe, that the church sometimes denotes a single family, or rather a few individuals associated together in observing the institutions of the Gospel. This appears from such passages as the following: "Greet the church that is in the house of Aquila and Priscilla." "Salute the church which is in the house of Nymphas."‡ It is highly probable that those churches consisted, not only of the children and servants belonging to the persons named, but of others, who, professing the faith, repaired to their houses at stated times to hear the word, and to unite in the exercises of prayer and praise. There is little reason to think that the primitive disciples had any other houses in which they might hold their conventicles, as they were an infant sect, and were surrounded with enemies, whose notice it would have been imprudent to attract by a public display. However few in number, they were encouraged to meet by the gracious promise of our Saviour, that "where two or three are met together in his name, he is in the midst of them."

Again, The Church signifies all the Christians in a particular city, whether they assembled for religious offices in one place, or in several places. This is plain from the following words: "Now there was in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers."* All the disciples in that celebrated city were accounted one church; while it is beyond doubt that they were too many to form only one congregation. On this subject, indeed, there has been a diversity of opinion; and, in particular, Independents, have discovered an anxious wish to prove the negative, because the fact which I am stating, is at variance with their notions of the constitution of a church. But let us attend to the language in which the sacred historian speaks of the success of the Gospel among its inhabitants: "And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord." "And it came to pass, that a whole year Saul and Barnabas assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people; and the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch."† When we consider that there were many converts before the arrival of Barnabas and Saul, and that they had laboured with success for a whole year prior to the time when the church is spoken of as one, it must be strong prejudice which leads any person to deny that the word is used as a general term comprehending several congregations; for it is altogether incredible that the disciples would have been called "a great number," and "much people," if they could have been convened in one house, and for the reason given above, probably a private house. In the same sense the word is used in reference to Jerusalem, all the disciples in which are repeatedly represented as one church.‡ But that there were more assemblies than one in that city is evident, not only from the number of converts specified in the Acts, many of whom might be strangers, who afterwards removed to different places; but from the fact that the Apostles continued a long time in it after the day of Pentecost, not surely to minister to a single society of believers; and that the poor were so numerous, that not one deacon, but seven, were appointed to take care of them. I have dwelt rather long upon this point; but as this application of the term has been contested, some discussion was necessary, and I have thus been led to anticipate an argument which will again be brought forward in favour of the form of church-government which we have adopted.

There is another sense of the term which is now common, but of which I do not find any example in the New Testament, namely, when it is employed to denote the inhabitants of a whole country united in the same religious profession. There we read of the churches of Judea, the churches of Galatia, the churches of Macedonia, the churches of Asia. We, in this country, speak of the Church of Scotland, the Church of England, the Church of Holland, &c. This phraseology has arisen from the connexion of the church with the state, in consequence of which, Christianity, or rather a particular modification of Christianity, is established by law in a particular country, and all the inhabitants are required to adopt it in that form, unless a toleration be granted to dissenters to worship God according to the dictates of their consciences. This has originated in an attempt to make Christianity a national affair, and to render the church commensurate with the territory over which the power of the civil government extends. It would lead us away from our present design, to enter upon

* Heb. ii. 12. † Synagogue. ‡ Rom. xvi. 5. Col. iv. 15.

* Acts xiii. 1. † Ib. xi. 21, 26.
‡ Ib. v. 11. viii. 1, 3. xi. 22. xii. 1, 5. &c.

the question concerning the lawfulness of civil establishments of religion. In general, we may say, that, so far as they blend together secular and spiritual things, interfere with religious liberty, and consider men as Christians, merely because they are subjects of the state, they are unscriptural, and must prove the source of manifold and grievous corruptions.

Farther, The word has been supposed to denote, not a whole religious society, but only the office-bearers in it. It has been considered as bearing this sense in the following words: "And if he shall neglect to hear thee, tell it to the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."* It is evident that the offending brother is to be brought before the church for judgment; and if he prove refractory, to be excommunicated. The power of government Presbyterians affirm, is not vested in the people, but in those who preside over them; and consequently, if they are right, the church must here mean the ministers and rulers. Independents, of course, reject this interpretation; and some who differ from them in their views of church government, explain the words in a different manner. To settle this controversy, would require a train of circuitous reasoning, into which this is not the proper time to enter. I shall therefore pass over this sense of the term, and proceed to another, concerning which there is no dispute.

I observe, in the last place, that the church signifies all the disciples of Christ throughout the world. There are many examples of this extensive meaning of the term: "The church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." "The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."† In these passages, the meaning of the term is more extensive than in any of the former instances, and comprehends all in every country, and in every age, who acknowledge Jesus Christ as their spiritual head.

In speaking of the church in this general view, it is necessary to consider it under two aspects, and to attend to the distinction which is commonly made of it into visible and invisible.

"The visible church," says our Confession of Faith, "consist of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation."‡ It comprehends, therefore, various sects, differing from each other in some particulars, but united in acknowledging the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the rule of faith and practice, and observing the ordinances of the gospel. The Church of England calls the visible church "a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."‖ We may acquiesce in both definitions; but they are general, and particularly the first, so that we may find some difficulty in practically applying them, to ascertain who are the true members of this church. Some sects we must exclude, because they deny the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, as Unitarians do; but others hold a mixture of truth and error, and hence it may not be easy to determine whether they should be admitted for the truth or rejected for the error. Again, if the visible church consists of those who profess the true religion, and is an assembly of faithful men, it follows that those who do not fall under this description,—men who are ignorant of the doctrines of religion, disregard its ordinances, and openly transgress its laws,—cannot be considered as belonging to it. However contradictory, therefore, may be the practice of the two churches of Scotland and England, the creed of neither encourages the idea of national Christianity, or of holding every person who is born in a particular country to be a member of the church, merely because he has been baptized by it, and is living within its bounds. The phrase, the visible church, is used very loosely by us all; but, if we would speak scripturally, and even rationally, we would not include in it the grossly ignorant and openly profane, any more than heathens and Mahometans; for the former are as little connected with Jesus Christ, even in outward appearance, as the latter. We would comprehend in the visible church none but those who make a credible profession of religion; that is, none but persons who possess a competent knowledge of its doctrines, observe its institutions, and regulate their conduct by its laws. Were this mode of settling its limits adopted, they would be very much narrowed, and a great part of what is called the Christian world would be left without its pale.

This church is called visible, not only because the persons who compose it are not angels or separate spirits, but men dwelling in mortal flesh, but because, as a society, it falls under the observation of our senses. The members are known; their assemblies are public; we may be present in them, and observe the celebration of the several parts of their worship. It is distinguishable, like any other society; and we can say, Here is the church of Christ; but there is the church of the Jews or of the Mahometans. Nothing more is necessary to discover it than the use of our senses. Having learned, by the perusal of the Scriptures, what are the discriminating characters of the church, wherever we perceive a society whose creed and observances are upon the whole conformable to this pattern, we are authorized to say, This is the church, or rather, a part of the church.

"The invisible church," I again quote the words of our Confession, "consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."* This is a definition of the church for which Christ gave himself; for he died for all who were chosen in him to salvation; but not an accurate definition of the invisible church as actually existing, in which not all the elect are comprehended, but those only who have believed. I consider the invisible church to be the congregation of those who have been called by Divine grace into the fellowship of the gospel, and sanctified by the truth; and they are one congregation, because, however distant in place and diversified in circumstances, they are united by closer bonds than those of external communion. "By one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into that one Spirit."† In the visible church there is a mixture of saints and sinners, as there is of chaff and grain in the barn-floor, and of wheat and tares in the field; but this society is pure; not that the individuals who compose it are free from sin, but that they are all of one description, having been born from above. This is the true church, in which God dwells, and to which the promises are made. This is the body of Christ, to which he communicates spiritual influences, that it may "increase with the increase of God."

This church is said to be invisible, because it cannot be discovered by the eye. It is not separated from the world in respect of place, but of state. It lies hidden in the visible church, from which it cannot be

* Matth. xviii. 17. † Acts xx. 28. Eph. v. 25. 1 Tim. iij. 15.
‡ Conf. xxv. 2. ‖ Art. xix.

* Conf. xxv. 1. † 1 Cor. xii. 13.

certainly distinguished. The qualifications of its members are internal; their faith and love are not the objects of sense. Towards our fellow men we can exercise only the judgment of charity, founded on probable grounds; but we are liable to err, and from various causes may suppose saints to be hypocrites, and hypocrites to be saints. It is unseen by every eye but that which "searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men." "The Lord," and he only, "knows them that are his."

Hitherto I have spoken of the Church as subsisting exclusively upon earth; but there is another distinction which relates to it, as subsisting both on earth and in heaven. Taken in this comprehensive sense, it is divided into the church militant, and the church triumphant. The former comprehends those who are engaged in the spiritual warfare, wrestling against principalities and powers, struggling with the flesh and the solicitations of the world, and, in some cases, resisting even unto blood in their opposition to sin. The latter is made up of the glorified saints, who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, and have obtained the crown of life which fades not away. Let it be observed, that these constitute only one church, one family in heaven and on earth, being subject to the same Head, animated by the same spirit, and, notwithstanding their distance, holding holy communion, while they take an interest in one another's joys and sorrows, and unite in the worship of Him who sits upon the throne, and of the Lamb.

The design of the establishment of the church will be explained by the following particulars. First, It is appointed to be the depository of divine truth, in which it should be preserved, and by which it should be published to the world. To the Jews were committed the oracles of God in ancient times; but the custody of them is now transferred to the Christian church. Hence it is called, in a passage formerly quoted, "the pillar and ground of the truth." Secondly, It is an important part of its duty, to maintain and observe the ordinances of Christ, that the ends of their institution may be accomplished in the salvation of men, and He may receive due honour, as the exalted Lord to whom every knee should bow of things on earth. Thirdly, It is intended to be the asylum of sinners, who are called upon to leave the society of the world, and to enter into it by faith, that tney may escape the destruction which is coming upon the wicked. It is like the cities of refuge in the promised land, into which the man-slayer fled from the pursuit of the avenger of blood. Lastly, It is the nursery of the saints, in which they are trained for the duties of the present life and the happiness of the next, by spiritual instruction and watchful superintendence, by doctrine and discipline.

From the general remarks which have been already made, it has appeared who are the members of the church considered both as visible and as invisible. With respect to the latter, it is unnecessary to say any thing farther, as there can be no doubt that the members are believers, regenerated persons, saints, since the Scripture says expressly, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."* But concerning the qualifications of the members of the visible church, it will be proper to enter into a more particular discussion.

First, An indispensable qualification of the members of the visible church is baptism, which has been called the initiatory seal of the new covenant, and is the rite by which our admission into the society of the faithful is declared. When Jesus Christ sent his Apostles to establish his church upon earth, he said to them, "Go ye therefore and teach," or rather, make disciples of "all nations"—μαθητευσατε παντα τα εθνη—"baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* They were to be made disciples by baptism; not that the simple administration of this rite would constitute them such, or that it was to be administered to all who should come in the way of the Apostles, but that when they found persons who, having heard the Gospel, professed faith in Christ, they should baptize them, and in this manner receive them into the number of his followers. As the uncircumcised were not admitted into the congregation of Israel, so the unbaptized have no right to enter into the church. In this respect the two ordinances resemble each other, that both were instituted as a preliminary step to the enjoyment of the other privileges of the people of God. It does not however follow, that baptism is necessary to salvation; for we may conceive a case, and it has actually happened, that a man has by some means—for example, by the perusal of the Scriptures—been savingly enlightened, who, at the same time, was in such a situation that he could not obtain the external sign of the righteousness of faith. There is no doubt that such a man went to heaven at death, and that he was a member of the invisible church, which is united to its exalted Head by the Spirit; but of the visible church, he was not a member, because he wanted, yet without any fault on his part, the distinguishing badge of Christianity. Hence you perceive the reason that our Confession expresses itself with some degree of caution, when it says, that "out of the visible church there is no *ordinary* possibility of salvation." There is a possibility of salvation without its pale; but the cases are extraordinary, and such as those to which I have just now referred. When men have access to the church, they are bound by the highest authority to enter into its communion, and therefore to submit to baptism, which is the door of admission. If any person, knowing baptism to be an ordinance of Christ, should deliberately and contemptuously neglect it, he would no more be a disciple of Christ than a heathen or a Mahometan, and his final salvation would be as impossible as if he had lived and died in the habitual violation of any moral precept.

The second qualification of the members of the church, is knowledge; for Jesus Christ does not want blind followers, who are attached to him merely for his name, or in consequence of their local situation; and the ignorant are utterly incapable of performing the duties incumbent upon the members of this spiritual society. What degree of knowledge is requisite, it is not easy to determine with accuracy. Men differ much in education, in talents, in opportunities, so that it would be equally absurd to demand the same proficiency in all the candidates, as to insist that they should be all of the same stature. But unless a person know something about his own natural character and state, something about the person and office, and work of the Saviour, something about the promises of God, and the duties of a Christian, he cannot make a rational profession of faith, and consequently ought not to be admitted. The Church of Rome requires implicit faith in the members. This does not mean, as you might suppose from the terms, a belief of certain doctrines simply upon the authority of the church, but something much more mysterious, and of which the world never had an idea till it was revealed by the Schoolmen. Implicit faith is a belief that all the doctrines held by the church are true, although you know nothing about them, and never so much as heard them mentioned. It matters not to you what the church believes, and you need not give yourself the trouble

* Rom. viii. 9.

* Matth. xxviii. 19.

to inquire; if you believe that all that she believes is agreeable to truth, you are an orthodox Christian, and are sure to go to heaven. In short, the Church of Rome teaches men to believe by proxy, to have faith without having one idea of the object of faith, to assent to a creed of which they know as little as the inhabitants of Tartary. Such a faith is very suitable to a church which holds that ignorance is the mother of devotion; but would ill accord with the church of Christ, which proposes its creed to be read and studied by all, invites and encourages inquiry, and demands from men a rational service. Those are commended who, like the Bereans, search the Scriptures daily, with a view to ascertain whether the doctrines proposed to them are true; and every member is called upon to be always ready to give "a reason of the hope which is in him, to any man who asks him."

The standard by which the knowledge of those who seek admission into the church should be tried, is the Scriptures. But the several churches of Christendom have adopted, besides the Scriptures, what have been called subordinate standards,—creeds, articles, and confessions. At first it may seem that this is an unwarrantable addition, and derogates from the perfection and permanent authority of the word of God; but their conduct admits of a satisfactory explanation. In the first place, They profess—and this is true at least of Protestant churches—to exhibit in their creeds only the doctrines of Scripture, and to exclude all human dogmas. But if this is a fair representation of the design of their creeds, it may be said that they are of no use, as the Scriptures contain all that they tell us. In answer to this objection, I observe, in the second place, That they are necessary for the defence of the truth against heresies and errors. The authors of these profess great reverence for the Scriptures, and are ready at any time to give an account of their faith couched in their language, while they affix to it a sense totally different from that which you understand it to convey. Hence arose the necessity of employing a test to ascertain their real sentiments; and such a test is a creed expressed in human words, which established usage has rendered definite and incapable of perversion. This is a short account of the origin of creeds; and those who exclaim most vehemently against them, are the causes of the evil of which they complain.

When churches employ their subordinate standards as a test of religious sentiments, their reason is not that they consider them as having any authority in themselves, but that they appear to them to be founded on Scripture, and proper therefore to be used as a means of discovering the real sentiments of those who are desirous to be received into their fellowship. It is evident, however, that if the assent of private members is to be required to them, they ought to be very short and simple; and some modern creeds, however excellent, are too copious, and involve too many intricate points, to be fit for this purpose.

I might add as a third qualification of the members of the church, a profession of faith; for it is not the simple possession of knowledge which entitles any man to be admitted into its communion, but a declaration, explicit or implied, that he believes the doctrines in which he has been instructed, acknowledges Jesus Christ as his Saviour, submits to his authority, and is resolved to yield obedience to his laws and institutions. This profession is made by adults at their baptism, and by those who were baptized in infancy, by their attendance upon the ordinances of religion, and by the answers returned to the questions proposed to them when they apply for admission to the Lord's table.

The last qualification which I shall mention, is a character which shall give credibility to this profession. If men profess to know God, but deny him in works, their conduct neutralizes their profession, and it is no breach of charity to consider it as insincere. Of faith as it exists in the heart, we can have no knowledge but by external signs, which are to be sought for in the practice; because the truths of religion, when believed, do not remain as an intellectual treasure in the understanding, but exerting their power upon the heart, give rise to a conduct becoming the gospel. Our Lord has laid down a rule to direct us in our private and public judgments of our brethren, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."* All Christians might be expected to agree, that into a society founded by Jesus Christ, and dedicated to his service, those should not be permitted to enter, who show, by their disregard of piety and their unholy actions, that whatever they pretend, they are hostile to his religion; and that a church is criminally negligent, and guilty of a violation of her trust, which lays open her fellowship to the profane and worldly. The members of the primitive church are addressed as "saints," and "faithful in Christ Jesus," and were so called perhaps, because the majority were truly entitled to this appellation, or at least because they were saints in appearance. There were great irregularities in that church; but these were unavoidable in a society, all the members of which were imperfect, and into which some unworthy persons had intruded under the mask of hypocrisy. They were not however allowed, and discipline was employed to correct them, and to expel those who refused to be reformed.

From the account which has been given of the necessary qualifications for admission into the visible church, it follows that it is not regeneration by the Spirit which is an indispensable pre-requisite, but the appearance of it; and after all that can be said upon the subject, in this the greatest zealots for purity of communion must virtually acquiesce. It is certain, that God has not given the church authority to scrutinize the hearts of candidates, because he has not furnished the means. The gift of discerning spirits has long since ceased, and the present rulers of the church can judge only by profession and practice. To attempt to penetrate into the recesses of the soul, is to erect an inquisitorial tribunal for the trial of men's spiritual state; and as long as there are hypocrisy and self-deceit in the world, the sentences pronounced from it will be often exceedingly unjust. The Apostles appear to have received disciples upon such a profession of faith as we require from our applicants; and although it is manifest from the New Testament, that there were unregenerated persons in the primitive church, we do not find that they thought of expelling them on this ground, if they were free from scandalous crimes. Without regeneration, however, we readily acknowledge external connexion with the visible church will be of no avail, "for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."†

In the sequel of this lecture, I shall direct your attention to some general characters or properties of the church.

The first is its unity. It is one church, and must be so called, whether we consider it as invisible or visible. With regard to the former there is no doubt, as all its members are united to Jesus Christ, as their head, animated by the Spirit of holiness, and thus compacted into one body. The unity may not be so obvious with respect to the latter, because it is divided into different societies, not only distinct in place, but also disjoined by the peculiarity of their tenets and

* Matth. vii. 16, 17. † Gal. v. 6.

usages. But the appearance of disunion will be diminished, if we attend to what was formerly hinted, that although the designation of the visible church is employed in common language with great latitude, yet we cannot rationally and scripturally comprehend in it any society, which does not profess the true religion in its essential parts. We thus exclude heretical sects, and recognize as the constituent members, those only who acknowledge "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." These we account one on the ground of the fundamental points in which they agree, and do not consider the unity as destroyed by the minor point in which they disagree. Particular churches would do well to look upon themselves only as integral parts, and not as the whole. The latter idea is too much encouraged by the illiberal views and high pretensions of some parties. In certain cases it is avowed; and thus, while certain societies appropriate the name and privileges of the church, to the exclusion of all others, they prove themselves to be no part of it at all, but are self-excommunicated, cut off by their own act from all interest in the body of Christ.

The second character of the Church is its universality. It is the catholic church; and this epithet is explained by the Fathers to mean that it extends throughout the world, reaches from one end of the earth to another, as a body, says Theophylact, consisting of the churches every where, having Christ as its head. It is called Catholic, to signify that it is not confined to a particular country or sect, but comprehends all who profess the true religion, and observe the ordinances of the gospel. It is not Catholic *de facto*,* if we mean by this word *universally diffused*; for we know that there are extensive regions and populous nations in which it has not been established, or claims only a very few of the inhabitants. The whole number of nominal Christians amounts only to a fifth or a sixth part of the human race. But it is Catholic *de jure*,† because "the heathen have been given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." His commission authorized the Apostles and their successors to preach the gospel to every creature; and the sense in which we understand prophecy, encourages us to hope that in a future age, the light of truth, like that of the sun, will illuminate every region; that the whole world will be converted into a temple, and all its inhabitants will be worshippers of the living God. The claims of the church of Rome to be the Catholic Church are well known, and to every man who understands the Scriptures, they appear equally presumptuous and ridiculous. Their arrogant style is too much imitated by some Protestants. In the southern part of the Island, the cry of "the Church," "the Church," is raised by proud, intolerant, uncharitable men, who appropriate this name to their own society, and pronounce all who do not submit to the government of bishops, to be schismatics and sectarians, who have no hope of salvation but through the uncovenanted mercy of God. But "we have not so learned Christ." We acknowledge as a part of the church "every congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly administered."

The third character of the church is its perpetuity. The declarations and promises concerning Zion, that God would establish it, and that it should be his rest for ever, are fulfilled in that society of which it was a figure. We believe upon the best authority, that as the church has subsisted from its erection to the present hour, so it will continue through all subsequent ages, till the second coming of Christ. "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;"‡ neither death, which is daily making havock among the members, and is probably meant by the gates of Hades, nor the powers of darkness, as the words in our translation seem to import. In the most degenerate times God has had a seed to serve him, a remnant has been saved; as in the days of Elijah, who supposed himself to be the sole worshipper of God, while there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. There has always, too, been a visible profession of Christianity; there have been assemblies held, in which its forms of worship have been observed; and although many of these have been so corrupt, that they might rather have been considered as synagogues of Satan, yet even during the reign of Antichrist, it appears that in some corner or other of Christendom, there were men enlightened by divine grace, who escaped the general pollution, and maintained the truth at the peril of their lives.

With the perpetuity of the church, is intimately connected the question concerning its infallibility. It is one of the principal points of discussion between Protestants and Papists. The latter strenuously maintain that the church cannot err; and appropriating this prerogative to their own church, they call upon all men, under the pain of damnation, to submit to its authority. In settling the point to which this infallibility extends, they differ among themselves; but all agree that it is lodged somewhere in the church, in the Pope, or in a general council, or in both united. The doctrine of Protestants is stated in our Confession of Faith, in the following passages. "All synods or councils since the Apostles' time, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred." "The purest churches upon earth are subject both to mixture and error, and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan."* These assertions it would be easy to support, both by reasoning from Scripture, and by an appeal to the history of religion in the ages which are past. We believe that infallibility can be predicated of no assembly, however learned, of no association of professed Christians, and still less of any individual, although dignified with the high title of the vicegerent of Christ. Still, there is a sense in which the church may be said to be infallible, and must be considered as such, if we hold its perpetuity. The true faith can never be utterly lost, because, if such a calamity could take place, the church would be annihilated. The truth will be known and professed by some society or other, greater or less, in all generations, and all the true members of the church are under the unerring guidance of the Spirit; so that, although they may mistake in some points, and be for a time seduced by temptation, they shall not totally and finally apostatize. This view of the matter does not in any degree favour the pretensions of the Church of Rome, or secure the faith of one society more than that of another. It is applicable to no particular church, and merely affirms that, however widely error may be diffused, and whatever desolation persecution may work, the power of Jesus Christ will preserve his own religion, and raise up some persons to profess it.

* In fact. † Of right. ‡ Matth. xvi. 18.

LECTURE XCVII.

ON THE CHURCH.

True Nature of Schism.—Separation, when Justifiable.—Government of the Church.—Different Opinions Respecting it.—Popish Form.—Assumptions on which it is founded, Examined and Disproved.—Episcopacy.—Examination of the Arguments in its Favour.—Proof that Presbyters and Bishops are of the same Order.

It is the duty of the members of the church to dwell together as brethren in unity. Many arguments

* Conf. xxxi. 4. xxv. 5.

are employed in Scripture to inculcate mutual love; but there is one derived, in particular, from the connexion which subsists between them as parts of a whole: "God," says Paul, "has tempered the human body together, that there should be no schism in it, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now," he adds, "ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular;"* applying this illustration to the church, and signifying that the members should sympathize with each other.

Opposed to this love, which should characterize the disciples of Christ, is schism; an evil which is highly detrimental to the interests of religion, and of which it is the more necessary to take notice, because its true nature has been often misunderstood. In common language, it signifies an open division among Christians; and they are called schismatics who have withdrawn from the communion of a church, and formed themselves into a separate party. Dr. Campbell, in his Preliminary Dissertations,† has explained the scriptural sense of the term. His view of it, however, is not new, but had been adopted long before him by many writers, who had accurately examined its import. The Apostle Paul uses the word to denote an internal division in the church, arising from alienation of affection. Hence he says to the Corinthians, "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there be no schisms among you."‡ He addressed this earnest exhortation to them, not so much to prevent the evil, as to suppress it, for he knew that it already existed: "When ye come together in the church, I hear that there are schisms among you, and I partly believe it."‖ As he exhorts them, at the same time, to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, he intimates that their schisms proceeded from a difference of sentiment; and it is certain that, if men were agreed in all their views, the utmost harmony would prevail. But, whatever is the cause, schism itself consists in the want of love among the members of the church, and may exist in full force while there is no visible breach in their external communion. If, in a church, there are two parties who meet in the same places of worship, and are subject to the same rulers, but, at the same time, are actuated by mutual jealousy, and are secretly endeavouring to counteract and undermine each other; in that church there is a schism. United in their sentiments respecting articles of faith and modes of worship, Christians may be divided about matters of inferior moment, as we too often see the peace of congregations disturbed, and hostile parties formed, about the management of their temporal affairs, or the election of a minister, or some point much more insignificant. The schism in the Church of Corinth originated in the preference of one minister to another; while one said, "I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, and a third, I am of Cephas."§ In all such cases a schism exists, because that love is wanting, without which a society of professed Christians is not one body, but a number of parts in juxta-position, or a chaos of discordant elements.

Let us proceed to speak of separation from a church. Now the question, whether in any case it is lawful, relates to a particular, not to the universal church; for to separate from the latter would be to renounce Christianity, and to excommunicate ourselves from Jesus Christ himself. There have been individuals so situated, that they could not hold fellowship with any society of Christians; but they considered themselves as still belonging to the true church, and were ready to unite themselves visibly to it as soon as they should enjoy an opportunity. A total separation from it takes place in cases of apostasy, as when a person, who had been baptized, becomes an Infidel, a Jew, a Mahometan, or a Heathen. It is, therefore, only concerning the lawfulness of separation from a particular church, that there is any room for discussion. I begin with observing, that no particular church has a claim, distinct from the truth of its principles, upon any man to enter into its communion, rather than into that of any other church which is equally pure. He may have been baptized by its ministers; but as the sacraments are not badges of a party, but belong to the whole body of Christians, he must be considered as having been baptized into the communion of the Catholic Church. His accession to a particular church, when he has arrived at the age of maturity, ought to be the result of a serious examination whether its creed accords with the infallible standard. When he has found such a church, he ought not to withdraw from it upon light grounds; and nothing is more unbecoming the Christian profession, than the conduct of those who run from one society to another, from restlessness of temper, or in resentment of some occasional offence which has arisen, not from the fault of the church, but from the imprudence of some individual. There is not, however, a greater absurdity, than to suppose that, when a man has connected himself with a church, he should remain in it, whatever may be its errors in doctrine, and corruption in practice. Many reason in this manner, and none are more apt to do so than the members of an established church, in whose eyes its connexion with the state gives it a sacredness and an authority which do not seem to belong to other denominations. But this is merely an adventitious circumstance, and prejudice being laid aside, an established church, considered simply as a religious society, will appear to every person, who judges according to sound reason, to be exactly on a level in respect of its spiritual claims with the sects which exist in its vicinity. That man has a very faint idea of his duty to Jesus Christ, who imagines that he is bound to continue in a church which is corrupt in doctrine, superstitious in worship, tyrannical in government, and, by the relaxation, or total neglect of discipline, profanes its privileges by extending them to the unholy, and converts itself into a worldly society. It is not, however, every thing exceptionable in the order and proceedings of a church which will justify us in forsaking it. Those who acknowledge that men are imperfect, are not very consistent in expecting perfection in any association made up of such fallible materials. Even great corruptions will not authorize us to separate, till means have been used to remedy them; but, when every endeavour has failed, and the prevailing party are determined to persist, no enlightened Christian can be at a loss with respect to his duty. He must listen to the voice of conscience; he must obey God rather than men. He may be stigmatized as a separatist and a schismatic; but he is guiltless in the sight of God, and those alone are responsible for the consequences, who have laid him under the necessity of maintaining, in this manner, his fidelity to Christ. It is a consolation to know that he is still in the church of the living God, which is not circumscribed by legal boundaries, and is independent of acts of the legislature, and the patronage of the great.

To the constitution of any society, laws are necessary, and persons appointed to execute them; a number of individuals without government are a disorderly crowd. As Jesus Christ has founded his church to be the seat of love, and peace, and holy order, it may be

* 1 Cor. xii. 24—27. † Diss. ix. p. 3. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 10.
‖ 1 Cor. xi. 18. § Ib. i. 12.

presumed that he has given direction concerning the manner in which its affairs should be conducted. As we learn from the Scriptures, what office-bearers he has instituted, and what laws he has given to regulate the conduct of individuals, it is natural to expect that we shall receive some information from them with regard to the form which this spiritual society should sustain, and the power which should be exercised for the settlement of its concerns. Some have supposed that the government of the church is ambulatory; by which they mean, that no precise form has been prescribed, and that it is left to the wisdom of men to vary the form according to circumstances; to adapt it to the genius, and habits, and civil constitution of different nations. This is a summary mode of terminating all disputes about the subject. Nothing more is necessary than the exercise of political wisdom, accompanied with due care that the arrangements which are made may be Christian in their general character, and may not interfere with any of the acknowledged purposes which a church is intended to serve. Episcopacy will be the proper form in one country, Presbytery in another, and Independency in a third. The first will accord best with a monarchical government in the state, and the two latter with a republic.

Although this opinion has found many patrons, yet most Christians are disposed to think that a particular form of government was appointed by Christ and his Apostles; which consequently is of Divine right, ought to be adopted in all countries, and preserved inviolate to the end of the world. Hence Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Independents, advance a claim of preference in favour of their respective models; and the controversy has been carried on with great warmth, and not always with a Christian temper. It is argued that, if no human society can subsist without government, it is incredible that Jesus Christ, to whom the care of the church is committed, should have left it without this necessary provision for its welfare; that human wisdom was not competent to supply this defect, because it is apt to err even in temporal affairs, and still more in those of a spiritual nature, and experience shows what horrible corruptions it has introduced under various pretexts; that, when the ends of church government are considered, it was evidently of the utmost importance that specific directions should be given, as the credit of religion, the advancement of piety and holiness, the encouragement of the good, and the restraint of the bad, so much depend upon the due administration of it; that a form of government was as necessary to the Christian, as it was to the Jewish Church: and we cannot reasonably suppose that, while the government of the latter was so exactly delineated, that of the former has been totally neglected.

It is hazardous and presumptuous to reason *a priori* concerning what God ought to have done, and hence to infer what he has actually done. This is a speculation too high for us; it is arrogant in short-sighted mortals, to point out the line of conduct which it behoved an infinite Being to pursue. Yet some have ventured to introduce *a priori* argument on the subject of church government, and to say, that certainly the wisdom of our Saviour would lead him to do what seemed proper to them. At the same time, it cannot be denied that there is considerable force in the arguments mentioned above, particularly in that taken from the constitution of the Jewish Church; and on these grounds, most Christians believe that there may be found in the Scriptures the outlines of a plan for the government of that spiritual society, over which Jesus Christ presides as Lord and King.

There is no point, however, about which Christians are more divided in sentiment; and this diversity may be owing partly to prejudices of various kinds, and partly to the fact, which none but furious zealots will deny, that the form of government is not so fully and explicitly taught in Scripture, as the fundamental articles of faith, and the great duties of morality. The three forms of government which it is necessary to discuss, are the Episcopalian, the Independent, and the Presbyterian; but before we enter upon these, we must turn our attention for a little to the Church of Rome.

Papists affirm that there is a visible head of the Church upon earth, and that this dignity is assigned to the bishop of Rome; that he is properly the only bishop by Divine right, the whole Episcopate being vested in him, and from him all other bishops derive their authority; that he has dominion over the whole Christian world; that all Christians are bound to submit to him, and that those who refuse to do so are heretics, and are exposed to eternal damnation; and that he possesses this supreme and uncontrolled power as the successor of Peter, who was bishop of Rome, and at his death left all his authority and prerogatives to his successors in that See. There are disputes among Roman Catholics, whether infallibility is lodged in the Pope or in a general council? and whether the Pope is superior to a council, or a council to the Pope? but they all acknowledge him to be the universal bishop, and the vicegerent of Christ.

Three points are assumed as the foundation of these extravagant claims; the supremacy of Peter, his residence in Rome in the character of its bishop, and the transmission of his power to those who occupy the same station.

With respect to the supremacy of Peter, it is founded, as Papists allege, upon the pre-eminence which is given to him in the evangelical history, and upon some things which our Lord said to him in particular. I shall take notice only of the principal passage: "I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;"* which is applied without hesitation to the person of Peter. There is indeed an allusion to his name, which, both in Syriac and in Greek, signifies *a stone*; but it is questionable whether any thing more was intended. You will observe that there is a slight change in the original—Συ ει Πετρος, και επι ταυτη τη πετρα οικοδομησω μου την εκκλησιαν.† Had he said, επι σοι οικοδομησω,‡ or, επι τουτω τω πετρω οικοδομησω,‖ the inference which Papists draw would have seemed to be more legitimate; but as the words are studiously varied—the one, πετρος, being in the masculine, and the other, πετρα, in the feminine gender,—there is reason to believe that our Lord merely alluded to his name; and that *the Rock* is either Christ himself, or the confession which Peter had made, that he is the Messiah, and the Son of the living God; for those are the truths upon which the Christian religion and the faith of the church are founded. In this sense the words have been understood by some learned and distinguished members of the Church of Rome, bishops, archbishops, and cardinals; who have honestly acknowledged that Christ alone is the Rock, and that it is absurd to interpret it of a man who, like Peter, was subject to infirmity. It is indeed added, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." But the same words were used on another occasion, when our Lord was speaking to all the Apostles,§ and consequently they do not imply any thing peculiar to Peter; and after his resurrection he gave them all equal authority, when he breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy

* Matt. xvi. 18.
† Thou art A STONE, and on this *rock* will I build my church
‡ On *thee* will I build. ‖ On this *stone* will I build.
§ Matt. xviii. 18.

Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."* As, however, the words were addressed in the first instance to Peter, and to him alone, some Protestants are disposed to admit that they import something peculiar,—not a superiority to his brethren, but a priority in the order of ministration; and think that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were said to be given to him in particular, because Jesus Christ had destined him to be the person who should open the kingdom, to the Jews by preaching to them on the day of Pentecost, and to the Gentiles by preaching to Cornelius.

We do not find that the supremacy of Peter was acknowledged by his contemporaries. It rather appears that it was utterly unknown to them, and that he is indebted for his exaltation above the other Apostles to the ignorant and superstitious veneration of posterity. He is indeed mentioned first on the day of Pentecost, when we are informed that he stood up with the eleven; but as the ardour of his temper had already impelled him frequently to come forward, and sometimes not much to his honour, so now, when it was under better direction, it would still lead him to take the precedence of his brethren in the performance of his duty. Besides, it is probable that he was the oldest of the company, and would on this account be the spokesman of the rest. Paul seems to have been ignorant of the pretended supremacy of Peter, when he says, that he himself was "not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles;"† for if he had ever heard of it, he would not have presumed to place himself upon a level with Peter; and, when comparing himself with the other Apostles, would have excepted him. He did not acknowledge his superiority at Antioch, where he "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed"‡ for symbolizing with the Jews, from an unmanly fear of certain persons who had come from Jerusalem. And the brethren of Jerusalem were far from submitting to him implicitly as the sovereign pontiff of the church, whose decisions should be received by all Christians with profound respect, when they contended with him after he had preached to Cornelius, and demanded an account of his conduct.‖

Having seen that the supremacy of Peter has no foundation in Scripture, let us inquire, Whether there is any proof that he was bishop of Rome? Some of the ancients asserted, and Papists firmly believe, that he was first bishop of Antioch, and afterwards removed to Rome, where he continued till his martyrdom, during the space of five-and-twenty years. Few of his pretended successors have equalled him in the length of his reign; and as those who are elected are commonly advanced in life, it is customary to say at the installation of a Pope, *Sancte pater, non videbis annos Petri.*§ I remark, in the first place, That it is absurd to suppose an Apostle to have been a bishop, because constant residence in any particular place was contrary to the nature and design of his office. The Apostles were appointed "to be witnesses to Christ in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."¶ They were given to the church at large; and would have been guilty of a violation of duty if they had appropriated their labours to a particular part of it. Peter is degraded by the supposition, that from being an Apostle he became bishop of Rome, unless he was also constituted the visible head of the church; but we have seen that the Scripture gives no countenance to his pretended supremacy. I remark, in the second place, That there is no satisfactory evidence that he was bishop of Rome. He is indeed called so by Eusebius, who wrote in the fourth century; and the oldest writer who is said to have asserted it, lived a hundred years after the death of the Apostle. But in a case of so much importance, it is not human testimony, however explicit, which would suffice, and far less uncertain traditions and doubtful arguments. If Jesus Christ did appoint him bishop of Rome and head of his church upon earth, and if it was his intention that all the subsequent bishops of that city should succeed him in his high prerogatives, and Christians should look up to them as their guides and governors, we might reasonably expect that the fact upon which the mighty superstructure is reared, would be clearly delivered in Scripture. On this subject, however, it preserves profound silence. Papists appeal to a verse in the first Epistle of Peter, which says, "The church that is at Babylon saluteth you;"* and affirm that this is Rome, because it is so called in the Revelation of John, and, consequently, that Peter was there when he wrote. But this is a miserable shift. In a prophetical work where symbolical language is used, Rome might be called Babylon, on account of its moral resemblance to that ancient city; but the change of the name would have been altogether improper in a plain epistle, in which there was no reason for concealment. There is no doubt that he means the Babylon so often mentioned in the Old Testament. It is decisive against the notion of Peter's residence in Rome, that in the Epistle which he addressed to the Corinthians there, Paul sent no salutation to him, although he saluted several others; and that, although he lived in Rome for at least two years, and wrote several epistles from it, he never once mentions his name. How could this have been if he had been bishop of that city? Not to multiply arguments, I shall only add, that Clement, who is so honourably mentioned in the New Testament, in an epistle written from Rome to the Church of Corinth, says that Paul suffered martyrdom in the west, but takes no notice of the martyrdom of Peter. His silence is absolutely unaccountable, if, as Papists tell us, Peter had been bishop of Rome, and had been crucified there before the eyes of Clement. The sum of all that has been said is, that we have no evidence that Peter was ever in Rome, and still less that he was its bishop.

Thus we see that the claims of the Pope are the baseless fabric of a vision. But although we should grant the premises, the conclusion would by no means necessarily follow. It is not a legitimate inference, that because Peter was universal bishop and resided in Rome, the bishops of Rome must be acknowledged the heads of the church, unless it could be shown that he had authority to transmit, and did actually leave, all his power and prerogatives to them. But at this point the proof totally fails. We have only assertion instead of argument; and it must be so, because Papists would have it so. How does it appear to have been the will of Christ that there should always be a visible head of his Church upon earth? How does it appear that the bishop of Antioch, where Peter is said to have first had his throne, has not as good a claim as the bishop of Rome? How comes it to pass that the ancient church knew nothing of this supremacy, and rejected all approaches to it? and that even a bishop of Rome thundered out anathemas against the bishop of Constantinople for assuming the very title in which his successors now glory?† And is it credible that Jesus Christ intended that they should be his representatives and vicegerents, whose ignorance, and profligacy, and cruelty, and falsehood, have stamped their names with infamy? that the gift of infallibility should be

* John xx. 22, 23. † 2 Cor. xi. 5. ‡ Gal. ii. 11.
‖ Acts xi. 2.
§ Holy father, thou shalt not see the years of Peter.
¶ Acts i. 8.

* 1 Pet. v. 13. † Gregory the Great, in A. D. 595.

conferred upon adulterers, and robbers, and murderers? and the salvation of men should be suspended upon submission to devils in human shape, as many of the Popes well deserve to be called? To these questions we leave the votaries of Antichrist to return such answers as they can.

It is not necessary to proceed farther in the consideration of the form of government established in the Church of Rome, and to speak of its cardinals and its different ecclesiastical orders. When stript of some adventitious circumstances, it resolves itself into simple Episcopacy; and our reasoning respecting this form of government will apply to every church, whether Greek, Papist, or Protestant, in which it is adopted.

I shall now, therefore, call your attention to the Episcopal form of government, and in the following remarks, shall refer to it as established in the southern part of the island.

In the Church of England, there are three ecclesiastical orders,—deacons, priests, and bishops. The lowest is the order of deacons, whose office it is to baptize, to read the Scriptures, homilies, and prayers to the people, to assist the priests in the distribution of the Eucharist, and if it seem good to the bishop, also to preach. It is the business of the priests, or presbyters, to preach, to read prayers, to administer both sacraments, and to pronounce the sentence of absolution upon penitents. To the bishop it belongs to ordain priests and deacons, to confirm those who have been baptized, and to rule over their dioceses, of which all the clergy are subject to their authority. In the government of the Church, neither deacons nor priests have any share; it is vested solely in the bishops. The latter may preach if they please, but this is a matter of choice. To preach the gospel is not an essential duty of their office, they are appointed merely to rule; and hence it appears that, although they receive double honour, they are not worthy of it, according to the judgment of Paul, who assigned it only to those who both rule well and labour in word and doctrine.*

Hence you will perceive what is the specific difference between Episcopacy and Presbytery. Episcopacy holds a distinction of ranks among the ministers of religion; and its fundamental article is that a bishop is superior to a presbyter. According to Presbytery, all the ministers of the word are on a level in respect of office and authority, whatever differences may be among them, in age, and talents, and learning. A gradation of ranks is indeed allowed even by Presbyterians, who admit elders to rule, and deacons to serve the poor; but they assert the parity of those whose office it is to preach and administer the sacraments.

The arguments of Episcopalians, in favour of their form of government, are derived from the Scriptures, as well as from the practice of antiquity.

In the first place, They have sometimes founded an argument upon the constitution of the Jewish Church, in which there was a gradation of ranks; the Levites being appointed to perform various inferior services in the tabernacle and temple, the priests to offer sacrifices upon the altar, and the High Priest to preside over them all, and to enter into the holy of holies. It has hence been inferred that the wisdom of Jesus Christ would undoubtedly lead him to give a similar constitution to his church. This, however, is only a presumptive argument, which is of no weight unless it be found to be supported by facts; and may be pronounced also to be a presumptuous one, as it prescribes the law of conduct, which he who is wiser than all men was bound to pursue. The Christian dispensation is so different from the Jewish, that no conclusion with respect to the former can be drawn from the mode of administering the latter. The ceremonial system was totally abolished at the death of Christ; and it is to no purpose to presume that any part of it was renewed, unless it can be proved that it actually was so from Scripture. It is not necessary to proceed farther in the refutation of this argument, as it is abandoned and rejected as invalid by some of the best writers of the Episcopal communion.

In the second place, They affirm that there was a distinction of ranks among the office-bearers of the church, instituted by our Lord himself during his ministry upon earth; and they appeal for proof to the Apostles, who were of the first degree, and to the Evangelists, who were of the second. The Apostles represented the bishops of the church, and the seventy disciples the presbyters. But "this comparison," says Dr. Whithy, "will not hold, for the seventy received not their mission, as Presbyters do, from bishops, but immediately from the Lord Christ as well as the Apostles, and in their first mission were plainly sent on the same mission, and with the same power."* According to him, they were not dependent upon the Apostles, and were equal to them in authority; and consequently, this is no warrant for Episcopalian subordination. Other writers of the same principles agree with him. The truth is, that the commission of the seventy seems to have been temporary, and probably ceased as soon as it was executed. But the argument is completely overthrown by a consideration which has been insisted upon even by an Episcopalian author. "It is obviously observable in the evangelical records, that the church was not and could not be founded till our Lord was risen from the dead, seeing it was to be founded on his resurrection." The truth of this remark is indisputable, and so likewise is the following reasoning from it. "If the Christian church had no being before Christ's resurrection, then certainly there was no government; and if no government, then certainly not prelatical government; and consequently, the argument is lost to all intents and purposes. It is clear as light, that the followers of Christ in the days of his flesh, were under no distinct government but that of the Jewish Church, with which they were still incorporated, and from which, as we have already proved, no consequence can be drawn for the nature of the Christian government."

In the third place, They reason in favour of Episcopacy from the cases of Timothy and Titus, whom they suppose to have been bishops, the one of Ephesus, and the other of Crete. They are indeed so called in the postscripts to the Epistles, which Paul addressed to them; but he who should reason from these would make himself ridiculous, because it is acknowledged by all learned men, that they are of a later age, and of no authority. Presbyterians affirm that there is not only no evidence that Timothy and Titus were bishops, but that the contrary is absolutely certain. Timothy was of a higher order even than a bishop, being expressly called an Evangelist, who was next in rank to an Apostle, and, like the Apostles, had a general care of the churches. Titus is commonly supposed to have held the same office. It is evident that Ephesus was not the stated charge of Timothy, because he would have left it when Paul went into Macedonia,† had not the Apostle entreated him to remain, on account of certain false teachers who were endeavouring to disseminate error in that church. Such intreaties would not have been necessary, if Timothy had been bishop of Ephesus, for such a man would not have thought of abandoning his station; nor would Paul have afterwards requested him to come to him at Rome, as he does in the second Epistle,‡ to be his companion and assistant there, in the absence of certain other persons

* 1 Tim. v. 17.

* Whitby's Commentary, note on Luke x. 1. † 1 Tim. i. 3.
‡ 2 Tim. iv. 9.

who had withdrawn for different reasons. Hence it is evident that his residence in Ephesus was merely temporary, for the accomplishment of a particular purpose; and it happens most unfortunately for the pretended bishopric of Timothy, that when Paul sometime before had an interview with the ministers of that church, as we read in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, he found that they had no need of a bishop, because they had not only one but many; for he addresses all the elders, as we shall afterwards see, by this appellation."*

It is evident that the argument equally fails with respect to Titus. He was left in Crete to ordain elders, to reprove sharply unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, to admonish heretics, and excommunicate such as were obstinate.† But, according to the principles of Episcopalians themselves, his office was extraordinary. The elders whom he was appointed to ordain, are expressly called bishops, as we shall afterwards show. But to ordain bishops is not the work of a bishop, but of an archbishop; and none will contend that there was any such person in the Apostolic church. Titus therefore could not be a bishop, but must have held a superior rank. The case seems to have been this, that the affairs of the church in Crete were not yet properly settled, and Titus, with the power of an Evangelist, was left by Paul on that island, to set in order the things which were wanting, and particularly to appoint ministers to labour in word and doctrine. That he was not the bishop of Crete may be inferred from the request or order of the Apostle, that he should come to him at Nicopolis, where he had determined to winter.‡ Paul surely would not have called him away from Crete, if it had been his stated charge; for, however common it has since been for bishops not to reside in their dioceses, no such practice was then known; and had there been any attempt to introduce it, the Apostle would have opposed himself to it as a criminal desertion of duty.

In the fourth place, They reason from the Epistles of Jesus Christ to the seven churches of Asia, which were addressed to the angels of those churches, by whom none can be meant but the bishops. I lay no stress upon an argument which has been used by Presbyterians, that the angels are the churches themselves, because it appears from the contents of the Epistles, and from the occasional use of the plural number, that they are addressed to the whole body of Christians. It is inconceivable that a whole society should be called an angel, and what is still more strange, the angel of itself; and there is certainly no reason for resorting to this supposition, as the Epistles, although intended for the respective churches, would naturally be sent to the persons who presided over them. I have therefore no doubt that the angel signifies an individual, but it does not follow that it signifies a bishop in the Episcopalian sense. It is a name not of order, but of office, which was given by the Jews to the president of their synagogues, and chiefly for this reason, that he offered up prayers to God in the name of the assembly. This being known to be the sense in which the word was understood by the Jews, John, who was himself a Jew, naturally applied it to the president of a Christian Church, or the minister who officiated in holy things, and acted as intercessor with God for the people. The utmost which can be fairly inferred, is, that in each of the Asiatic churches, there was a person who held the first place; but Episcopalians can derive no advantage to their cause from this circumstance, because Presbyterians hold, that in every congregation there is, or ought to be, one person at least who is superior to the rest, and to whom it pertains to conduct the public offices of religion.

Episcopacy is founded on the assumption, that bishops are of a different order from presbyters. If we can show that, in the style of Scripture, they are of the same order, the whole fabric falls to the ground. Now, when we look into the New Testament, we find that bishop and presbyter are convertible terms, and are indiscriminately applied to the same individuals. When Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, he stopped at Miletus, from which he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders or presbyters of the church. No mention, you will observe, is made of the bishop; but we are at no loss to find the reason. It had several bishops, and these were the very presbyters whom the Apostle had summoned to meet him, for he says to them, "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers."* Perhaps prejudice or party-zeal had some influence in rendering the word *overseers*, in this instance, because the term, in the original, if rendered in the usual way, would not accord with the Episcopalian scheme. The Greek word is επισκοπους, which, indeed, literally signifies *overseers*, but should have been translated *bishops* here, as it is in other places; but, then, it would have been evident to all, that Paul knew of no distinction between a bishop and a presbyter, because those who were first called presbyters, are now called bishops. In his Epistle to Titus, he says to him, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God."† It would be a waste of time to show, that here the bishop and the presbyter are the same person, and no man can resist the evidence, however much he may be disposed. The presbyter must be blameless, for the bishop must be blameless. There would be no force in this conclusion if a bishop and a presbyter were different persons. And hence you perceive the reason why, in his First Epistle to Timothy, he makes no mention at all of presbyters, but speaks only of bishops and deacons. It is, that he did not consider the two former as different; and consequently, in describing the qualifications of the one class, he describes those of the other. For the same reason he takes no notice of presbyters, in his Epistle to the Philippians, but addresses himself to the bishops and deacons.‡ He thus furnishes us with a new argument against Episcopacy. There were several bishops in the Church of Philippi; but how could this be, according to the scheme of our antagonists? More bishops than one in a church seem to them as monstrous as more heads than one upon a human body. It follows that the bishops of Philippi were plain presbyters, and that such were the only bishops in the Apostolic age. Wherever Episcopacy may be found, it is vain to seek for it in the Scriptures. Of this, its advocates are in some degree sensible, and therefore appeal to antiquity; but upon this part of the argument we cannot at present enter.

* Acts xx. 28. † Tit. i. 5, &c. ‡ Ib. iii. 12.

LECTURE XCVIII.

ON THE CHURCH.

Examination of the Arguments for Episcopacy, Drawn from Christian Antiquity.—Just Import of its Testimony.—Explanation of the Renunciation of Episcopacy in the Solemn League and Covenant.—Independent and Presbyterian Forms of Government.—Examination of the Arguments for Independency.—Proof that the Term "Church" in the New Testament Includes more than One Congregation.

I CONCLUDED the last lecture by observing, that Episcopalians appeal to antiquity in favour of their

* Acts. xx. 28, † Tit. i. 5—7. ‡ Phil. i. 1.

scheme of ecclesiastical government. Many of them have too much wisdom to think that any decisive argument can be drawn from the Scriptures, and they therefore have recourse to the practice of the primitive church; contending that, as Episcopacy is the most ancient form of government, it should be universally adopted. If it could be proved that there were such bishops as they plead for, ever since the death of the Apostles, and that it was universally affirmed by the earlier Fathers that they were instituted by the Apostles, we might be perplexed, but still should not be convinced, while we could find no vestige of them in the genuine apostolical writings. It is a Protestant principle, that nothing is an article of faith which is not delivered in the Scriptures in express terms, or by necessary consequence; and the moment we deviate from this principle, and admit any thing upon the authority of tradition, we begin to build upon the foundation of popery, and cannot foresee the extent of the superstructure which we may be led step by step to raise upon it. It has been observed, that Episcopalians, in managing the plea for their church from the testimony of antiquity, have been compelled to use the same sort of reasoning in defence of it, against the employment of which by papists, they protest in their controversy with them; that is, they will not allow them to argue from tradition in favour of their usages and dogmas. Such is the unhappy effect of adopting a principle for a particular purpose, while we find it inconvenient to follow it out into all its consequences. We are entangled in our own reasonings: we are under the necessity of retracting, at one time, what we had asserted at another; we give our antagonist an advantage which he will not fail to improve, and of which we cannot deprive him without totally shifting our ground.

It is not denied that the Fathers speak of bishops in the primitive church, and that lists are given of the succession of them in the principal Sees. With respect to these, there is a good deal of uncertainty; and it happens unfortunately for the high claims of the Church of Rome, that it is not easy to tell who came in the room of Peter, who, they pretend, was the first bishop. Clements, Clitus, Lenius, and Anaclitus, have been mentioned; but it is doubted whether Clitus and Anaclitus were not the same individual, and in what order the persons now named succeeded each other; while some have suspected that they are all cotemporary, and especially Bishops of Rome, as there were several bishops at the same time in Philippi. But although it were granted that the catalogues are correct, it remains to be proved that they were bishops in the Episcopalian, and not merely in the Scriptural sense; and Dr. Stillingfleet, himself a bishop, has candidly acknowledged, "that mere succession of single persons named above the rest in the successions in apostolical churches, cannot enforce any superiority of power in the persons so named, above others supposed to be joint governors of the churches with them."* We have seen that the titles of bishops and presbyters were indiscriminately given to all the ministers who conducted the religious service in the apostolic churches. It seems, however, that it was not long till the title of bishop was appropriated to one of them for the following reason. When there were more presbyters than one in a church, it was necessary, for the sake of order, that one should preside in the meetings which were held for the management of the public affairs. This honour was naturally assigned to the presbyter who was oldest, or who had most experience and the greatest talents; and he was known by the different names of president, pastor, governor, priest, and bishop. As it is not improbable that there were several presbyters in the seven churches, and this is certain with respect to Ephesus, when Paul had an interview with them; some have supposed that it is this president who is called the angel, in the epistles addressed to them. But he was only *primus inter pares*, the first among his equals, and first by their choice and consent. Sir Peter King, in his Inquiry into the Constitution of the primitive Church, considers bishops and presbyters as exactly of the same order, and invested with the same powers; and defines a presbyter to be "a person in holy orders, having thereby an inherent right to perform the whole office of a bishop, but being possessed of no place or parish, nor actually discharging it, without the permission and consent of the bishop of a place or parish."* This definition differs a little, but not materially, from the view which we have taken of bishops and presbyters; for it makes only this distinction between them, that bishops had a charge, and presbyters had not, and consequently, that presbyters must have leave from the bishop before they could perform any part of their function within the limits of his jurisdiction. Presbyterians make a similar distinction, and considering every minister as bishop in his own parish or congregation, forbid any other minister to preach and baptize in it without permission asked and obtained. Sir Peter proceeds to show, at considerable length, that the distinction, in the primitive church, was little more than nominal, because the powers of bishops and presbyters were the same. He proves, from the writings of the Fathers, that presbyters had a right to preach, that they baptized; that they administered the Eucharist; that they presided in the consistories together with the bishop; that they had power to excommunicate, to restore penitents, and to confirm; and lastly, that they had the power of ordination. He was therefore fully justified in saying, that "they were of the very same specific order with bishops, having the same inherent right to perform all ecclesiastical offices."† Thus far it appears that antiquity gives no countenance to modern Episcopacy, which affirms bishops to be of a different order from presbyters, and appropriates to them the power of ordination, and the whole government of the church.

Episcopalians appeal with much confidence to the epistles of Ignatius, as furnishing clear proof that, in his time, the church was governed by bishops; and they lay the greater stress upon his authority, because he flourished in the first, and ended his course by a glorious martyrdom early in the second century, was contemporary at least with some of the Apostles, and from an expression which he uses, but which is ambiguous, is supposed to have seen Christ in the flesh. There has, however, been much controversy respecting his epistles, and it is not yet terminated. When they were first published, they were full of gross corruptions, and contained heretical sentiments, which such a man as Ignatius, must have held in abhorrence; and as it thus appears that unprincipled men had altered them to serve their own purposes, it is impossible to determine to what extent they had carried their wicked design. In the more correct form which they have since assumed, it is impossible to ascertain with precision, what is genuine and what is interpolated, as some of the most learned writers of the Church of England have acknowledged; and this being the case, an appeal to them cannot decide the controversy, because it remains doubtful whether it is Ignatius himself who speaks, or some other person in his name. The style of the epistles concerning the dignity, the authority, and the prerogatives of a bishop, and the demand of little less than implicit submission to him,

* Works, vol. ii. p. 344, *Diversities of forms of Church Gov.* Part ii. ch. iv.

* Chap. iv. § 1. † Ib. § 3.

ill accords with the simplicity of the primitive times, and with the humility which may be conceived to have characterized a man who had lived with the Apostles, and had imbibed their spirit. Would the genuine Ignatius have said without qualification, that what the bishop approves is acceptable to God?

After all, from these epistles as they stand, it is the opinion even of some Episcopalians, that little can be drawn in favour of their scheme. "In all those thirty-five testimonies," says Bishop Stillingfleet, "produced out of Ignatius' epistles for Episcopacy, I can meet but with one which is brought to prove the least semblance of an institution of Christ for Episcopacy; and if I be not deceived, the sense of that place is clearly mistaken too."* From the impossibility of determining what is genuine and what is interpolated in those epistles, the utmost which we can safely infer from them is, that there were bishops in the days of Ignatius, but this concession will not at all serve the cause of our antagonists, because there were bishops in the days of the Apostles, who, we have seen, were only presbyters, and because the person to whom this name was afterwards given by way of distinction, was merely the president in an assembly of his equals.

We have already seen, that the bishops of the primitive church were very different from the persons to whom this title is given in modern times; that they possessed no peculiar powers, and could do nothing which a presbyter was not competent to perform. They differed from them also in the extent of their dioceses. A modern bishop has the superintendence of many churches or congregations scattered over the face of the country; but an ancient bishop presided over a single congregation only, or at most, over the Christians of a single city. The original meaning of the word has not been less changed in this respect, than by making it denote a person of a different order from a presbyter. There were bishops not only in large cities, but in small villages, as has been shown in many instances. The diocese of a bishop was exactly the parish of a Presbyterian minister; and many bishoprics were much smaller than the parishes in this country. The number of bishops shows that their jurisdiction was circumscribed within very narrow limits. In that part of Africa which was subject to the Romans, there were in the days of Augustine, about five hundred orthodox bishops, and four hundred of the sect of the Donatists; and in Ireland, which we have no reason to believe to have been nearly as populous as at present, St. Patrick is said to have founded three hundred and sixty-five churches, each of which was governed by a bishop. It would require a perspicacious eye to perceive any distinction between such bishops and those whom we call pastors of particular congregations. There is certainly no resemblance between them and the prelates of the English Church; and with whatever respect the latter may speak of them, I suspect that if they were still officiating in their humble charges, the bishops of the present age would not acknowledge them as their equals. It may be thought that, however diminutive the ancient dioceses were, the bishops truly deserved the title, because they had at least some clergy under them. There is no doubt that sometimes this was the case; and we have shown that this supposition is of little use to establish the claims of modern Episcopacy, because the bishop was at first only *primus inter pares*;† but it is probable that many of them laboured alone, without presbyters to assist them and execute their orders. It is not likely, for example, that those Irish bishops had inferior clergy, whose churches were so poor that they could afford them no better endowment than as much ground as would pasture two cows. This, we are informed, was the whole income of some of them.

The epistle of Clemens, "whose name," says Paul, "is in the book of life," is supposed to have been written between the years sixty-four and seventy of the first century, and consequently before the destruction of Jerusalem. It was addressed to the Church of Corinth, and had the same object with the epistles of Paul, to compose the contentions and divisions which existed in it. He says that "the Apostles, preaching through the countries and cities, appointed such of the first-fruits of their ministry as they had proved by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons;" plainly referring to two orders only, whereas Episcopalians affirm that there are three in the church. He goes on to say that "the Apostles, having known by our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be great strife about the name of Episcopacy, appointed the foresaid persons, namely, bishops and deacons, and ordained that there should be a succession of them." Then, referring to the insubordination which prevailed at Corinth, he adds, "It will be no small sin if we expel from the episcopate those who have blamelessly and holily offered the gifts. Blessed are the presbyters who have gone before, and who have had a fruitful and perfect dissolution, for they do not fear lest any person should remove them from their settled place." It is manifest that he here speaks of bishops and presbyters, as the same persons; and he does so in other parts of the Epistle, where, omitting the mention of bishops, he speaks only of presbyters. "It is base, very base, and unworthy of the conduct of Christians, that the ancient church of the Corinthians should, by means of one or two persons, make an insurrection against the presbyters."* And he tenders this exhortation: "Be ye who have made this insurrection subject to the presbyters." It is obvious that Clement knew of no bishops in the Corinthian Church, but presbyters; and it is remarkable that he never speaks of any persons in that church under the name of bishops, and still less of one to whom the title exclusively belonged.

Episcopalians appeal also to Irenæus, who presided over the Church of Lyons in the second century, and imagine that he bears testimony to their cause, when he says, "We can reckon those who were appointed bishops by the Apostles in the churches, and their successors, to our days, whom they left as their successors, delivering to them the same dignity of power," as his words have been rendered, but literally "delivering to them their own place of mastership;" evidently meaning nothing more than that they constituted them the supreme office-bearers in the church, as we acknowledge a preaching presbyter to be. Irenæus shows that these were the bishops to whom he referred, by saying farther: "It behoves us to hear the presbyters who are in the church, those who have their succession from the Apostles, and with the succession of the episcopate, have received the gift of truth according to the good pleasure of the Father."

Jerome, who in learning and judgment was equal to any of the Fathers, is decidedly against the divine origin of Episcopacy. A deacon in the Church of Rome had broached the opinion that deacons were superior to presbyters; Jerome confutes it in one of his epistles by this argument, that presbyters and bishops were the same in the days of the Apostles, and that no man could be so foolish as to maintain that deacons are superior to bishops. The proposition which is the foundation of his argument, he proves from those passages of Scripture which are usually produced by us to show the identity of apostolical bishops and presbyters. According to this Father, bishops and presbyters

* Works, vol. ii. p. 349. *Divine Right of Forms of Church Government*, Part ii. c. vi.

† First among his equals.

* Vid. Epist. 1. ad Corinth.

were not originally different, either in order or in degree; but the titles were given to the same individuals, and the distinction between them which subsisted in his time, was merely an arrangement of human prudence for the preservation of peace. This is not a deduction from his argument, but it is explicitly stated by himself. "A presbyter is the same with a bishop. Before, by the instigation of the devil, there were parties in religion, and it was said I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, the churches were governed by the common consent of presbyters. But afterwards it was decreed throughout the whole world that one chosen from the presbyters should be set over the rest, to whom the whole care of the church should pertain, that the seeds of schism might be plucked up." If Jerome is right, the plea of apostolical authority in favour of Episcopacy is unfounded; its *jus divinum** is a dream; and its authors, more modest than their successors, rested it solely upon the principle of expedience.

It appears, then, that in the controversy with the advocates of Episcopacy, we have to encounter strong assertions, but feeble proofs; lofty claims, but a very questionable title; and in short that their cause has nothing to support it but the sound of words in opposition to the sense.

You may think it unnecessary to have dwelt so long upon this subject, as with a few exceptions, we in this country are all agreed in rejecting the Episcopalian government as unscriptural. But in the other part of the island it is established by law, and with the arrogance which has so remarkably characterized it, pronounces those who have adopted a different form to be schismatics, and hardly entitled to the appellation of Christians. Dissenters, we have been told, have "a religion without a church," because what they call their church is not governed by bishops.

You are aware of the violent struggle between Episcopacy and Presbytery in the days of our fathers, in the course of which they displayed exemplary zeal, and were subjected to severe sufferings, resisting even to blood. The reign of Episcopacy in Scotland was marked by cruelty and murder. It was publicly and solemnly renounced at the renewal of the National Covenant, and afterwards in the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms, and was finally abolished at the Revolution. There is a fact relative to this business which is not generally known, and deserves to be mentioned; and I shall give it in the words of Mr. Baxter: "The covenant was proposed by the Parliament to the consideration of the Synod at Westminster. The synod stumbled at some things in it, and especially at the word *Prelacy*. Mr. Burges, the Prolocutor, Mr. Gataker, and abundance more, declared their judgments to be for Episcopacy, even for the ancient moderate Episcopacy, in which one stated president with his Presbytery governed every church; though not for the English diocesan frame, in which one bishop without his presbytery did, by a lay chancellor's court, govern all the presbyters and churches of a diocese being many hundreds; and that in a secular manner, by abundance of upstart secular officers, unknown to the primitive church. Hereupon grew some debate in the assembly, some being against every degree of bishops, (especially the Scottish divines,) and others being for a moderate Episcopacy. But these English divines would not subscribe the covenant, till there were an alteration suited to their judgments, and so a parenthesis was yielded to, as describing that sort of prelacy which they opposed,"—which follows the words, 'We shall endeavour the extirpation of prelacy,'—"[that is, church government by archbishops, bishops, deans, and chapters, archdeacons, and all other ecclesiastical officers, depending on that hierarchy.] All which conjoined are mentioned as the description of church government which they meant by prelacy, as not extending to the ancient Episcopacy. When the covenant was agreed on, the Lords and Commons first took it themselves; and Mr. Thomas Coleman preached in the House of Lords, and gave it them with this public explication, *that by prelacy, we mean not all Episcopacy, but only the form which is here described.*"* Hence you learn that the Solemn League was not such a security of presbytery as is commonly supposed, having been so framed that the friends of moderate Episcopacy could enter into it; but this is a matter of little moment, since we renounce Episcopacy, not because our fathers renounced it, but because we deem it to be contrary to Scripture.

I proceed to speak of Independency; but it is impossible to examine its claims, without at the same time attending to those of Presbytery. These are the only forms of government which appear to receive any countenance from Scripture, so that, if we overthrow the one, we virtually establish the other; and hence, it is necessary to view them in connexion. I begin with stating the principles of Independency, which are the following: that every particular society of visible professors, agreeing to walk together in the faith and order of the gospel, is a complete church; that the whole power of government is vested in the *coetus fidelium, the assembly of the faithful;* and that all censures and acts of government are administered in single congregations. The principles of Presbytery are, that particular congregations are only a part of the church, which is composed of many congregations; that the power of government is lodged in certain office-bearers, appointed by Jesus Christ; and that there is a subordination of courts, in which the sentences of inferior courts may be reviewed, and either affirmed or reversed. Hence you perceive the reason of the names by which these two forms of government are distinguished. The former is called Independency, because each congregation is a church distinct from and independent upon all other churches in the world, possessing all power in itself, and accountable only to Jesus Christ for its proceedings. The latter is called Presbytery, because it is governed by presbyters, or teaching and ruling elders, who, although chosen by the people, do not derive their power from them, but from Christ, and meet in presbyteries,—for this is truly the name of all our ecclesiastical courts, although for the sake of distinction, they are denominated sessions, presbyteries, and synods,—meet in presbyteries, I say, to regulate the affairs of particular congregations, of several congregations connected by vicinity, or of all the congregations in a province or a nation. You will observe, however, that these names do not mark, with perfect accuracy, the difference between the two forms of government; for it is not only possible, but it has actually happened, that a church has been independent of all other churches, and yet has been governed by presbyters, to the exclusion of the people; but use has affixed a definite sense to the words, and they immediately suggest the particular constitution of the churches to which they are respectively applied.

With a view to establish the principle upon which their system rests as its foundation, Independents labour to prove, that the churches mentioned in the New Testament were all single congregations. It is granted that this is sometimes the meaning of the word, as when the church in the house of a certain individual is spoken of; but I had occasion, in a former lecture, to remark, that there are cases in which it will not admit of so limited a signification. This is a point of

* Divine right.

* Baxter's Narrative of his own Life and Times, Part i. p. 43.

great importance in the present controversy; and if it can be proved that the word church is used, when it must be understood to comprehend several congregations, we shall be authorized to conclude that the plan of independency is unscriptural. It will be necessary to enter into some detail, and I shall select as an example, the church of Jerusalem.

Let it be observed that, although we read of the "churches of Judea," we never read of the "*churches* of Jerusalem;" but the "*church*" of that city is always mentioned in the singular number. It is impossible to account for this fact upon the principles of Independents, except by supposing, that there were no more believers in Jerusalem than might be collected in one assembly; and accordingly, they affirm that such was the case, and endeavour to explain the passages of Scripture, from which their antagonists draw a contrary conclusion, so as to favour this hypothesis. I think, however, that, to an impartial judge, it will appear that the laws of just criticism require a different interpretation, and that their comments do violence to the sacred text.

Let us attend to the narrative of the success of the Gospel in Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached to the Jews, "they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day, there were added unto them about three thousand souls." The chapter closes with this remark, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved;"* which is, indeed, very general, but conveys to us this information, that the society was constantly receiving an accession of new converts. Not long after, Peter again addressed the people, and what was the effect? "Many of them who heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand."† The historian speaks *of men*—*των ανδρων*,—and as this word denotes males, as distinguished from females, it may be fairly inferred that many women, although not mentioned, were converted at the same time, so that the whole number was probably much greater than five thousand. But whether we suppose females, as well as males, to have believed on this occasion or not, it is perfectly plain that the five thousand were additional to the three thousand who were formerly mentioned. One or two commentators, of great name, having unluckily adopted the notion that the three thousand are included in the five, Independents have eagerly laid hold of it to help them out of a difficulty. But I would ask, whether this idea would present itself to any person, whose mind was not prepossessed with a particular system; and whether it would not naturally occur to such a person, that Luke, who had stated the effect of the first sermon of Peter, here states the effect of the second, without referring to any thing which is past. Were another historian to tell us that, on a certain day, three thousand men joined an army, and that some days after, it was joined by five thousand, there is not a reader in the world who would suppose that he included the first number in the second. It is impossible to conceive any reason why a reader of the Acts should form a different opinion with respect to these two distinct numbers of converts. Thus we have eight thousand disciples in Jerusalem, besides those who were believers before the day of Pentecost, and those who, without being specified, were daily added to the church. It has been said with respect to those converts, and particularly such of them as embraced the Gospel on the day of Pentecost, that they were strangers, whose usual residence was in the countries enumerated, but who had come to Jerusalem to worship at the feast. It would be too much to deny that any of them were strangers; but there would be a manifest absurdity in supposing them to have been all of this description; for, was it ever heard that an extraordinary event brought together only the sojourners in a city? Does not every rational ground of calculation suggest the idea that sojourners were only a minority, and that the assembly consisted chiefly of the inhabitants of Jerusalem? It has been remarked that they are called "dwellers in Jerusalem,"* and that the word *κατοικων*, which the sacred historian uses, signifies *to have a permanent abode in a place*. When a temporary residence is expressed, the verb *παροικειν* is employed, which imports simply *to sojourn*, or *to be in a place for a short time*. Many of the converts, on the day of Pentecost, had lived in foreign countries; but they had now removed to Jerusalem, from secular or religious motives, or perhaps, as has been supposed, in expectation of the Messiah, whose advent was looked for about this period. At any rate, although they were present in Jerusalem only for a time, there is no reason to think that the assembly on Pentecost was composed wholly of them; and if it should be admitted, that, of the three thousand, one thousand, or even five hundred, were foreigners, we should make an ample allowance.

To the eight thousand who, at the lowest computation, already belonged to the church of Jerusalem, we must add many more; for we read that "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women;" that "the number of the disciples was multiplied;" and again, that "the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."† These passages import a very abundant increase, and justify us in understanding the following words, not of the disciples in Judea, or among the Jewish nation at large, but of those in Jerusalem alone: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe;"‡ in the original, *ποσαι μυριαδες—how many myriads*, or *tens of thousands*.

Independents are compelled by their system to reduce to the lowest possible number the disciples in a particular city. It is necessary for them to prove, not that the success of the gospel was great, but that it was small. They surely cannot feel any complacency in thus weakening the argument in favour of Christianity, from its rapid and extensive success; but we may justly suspect the cause which is forced to resort to such an expedient for support. It is certain that the argument completely fails in the case of Jerusalem, in which there was only one church, but the members amounted to thousands and myriads.

It is objected by Independents, that "all that believed were together, and had all things common."‖ It has been answered, that although the disciples, whose number was at this time about three thousand, had met together in one place, it will not follow that they could do so when they had increased to ten or twenty thousand: and yet even then they were only one church. It has been remarked too, that although the phrase *επι το αυτο*, translated *together*, may signify *in one place*, yet this is not necessarily its meaning, and that it occurs where it can import only unity of purpose: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered *together*—*επι το αυτο*—against the Lord, and against his Christ."§ These words are applied to the conspiracy of Pilate, the Sanhedrim, and Herod, against our Saviour; but we know that, although they concurred in one design, they did not assemble in the same place.

It is objected again, that they are said "to have continued daily with one accord in the temple."¶ As this immediately follows the other passage, the same

* Acts ii. 41, 47. † Ib. iv. 4.

* Acts ii. 5. † Ib. v. 14. vi. 1, 7. ‡ Ib. xxi. 20,
‖ Ib. ii. 44. § Ib. iv. 26. ¶ Ib. ii. 46.

answer may be returned, that, if three thousand might assemble in the temple, a meeting of all the disciples in it was impossible when the number had become much greater. Besides, as the meetings were daily, a little reflection will convince us that a multitude of people, chiefly in the lower ranks of life, could no more have found time every day to attend the ministrations of the Apostles than they could find it now; and, consequently, that the historian can only mean that the Apostles daily frequented the temple, and that the disciples met them there as they had opportunity. But there was no occasion always to repair to it for the purpose of hearing them, because the Apostles did not confine their labours to the temple, but "in every house ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ."*

An argument for one congregation in Jerusalem is founded on these words: "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together. And the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul."† But these two verses, although they stand in the order now quoted, have no connexion with each other; and it is altogether unfair to quote them as a proof that the multitude were assembled in the place which was shaken, as any person will see by reading the passage. The persons assembled in that place, are called the Apostles' own company; and probably were a select number of the disciples, met together to pray for the deliverance of Peter and John from the hands of their enemies.

The last argument is drawn from these words: "And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch, and of the rest durst no man join himself to them; but the people magnified them."‡ But here the question occurs, Who were the persons that were assembled in this porch? It is said in the beginning of the verse, that "by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people;" and it is then added, that "they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch." The most natural idea is, that the persons referred to were the Apostles; and as no others are mentioned but the people, or the Jews, who resorted to the temple, it is a mere fancy to suppose that the church was assembled in it.

It has appeared that there is no reason to suppose that all the Jews from foreign countries who were converted at Pentecost were merely sojourners in Jerusalem, and that the historian makes use of a term which imports that they had taken up their abode in it. This is confirmed by an event which took place some time after, and is thus related: "In those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."‖ The Grecians, or Hellenists, as every person knows, were Jews, who, living without the bounds of Judea, and scattered over what was once the Macedonian empire, spoke the Greek language, and used the Greek translation of the Scriptures in their synagogues. Of these there were some in the Church of Jerusalem; and it is highly probable that there were also others, who, having come from different regions, understood neither Hebrew nor Greek, and were acquainted only with the language of the country in which they were born. Hence arises a new argument for a plurality of congregations in Jerusalem. Although all the members of the church might have been convened in one place, they could not all have joined in the service, because what was understood by one part of them, would have been unintelligible to the other. It would be absurd to imagine that different speakers addressed the audience at the same time, or that the same speaker delivered a discourse first in one language and then in another. There is no reason, except the interests of a party, for making any supposition but the natural one, that as the first disciples in Jerusalem—the place of resort to Jews from every region of the earth—spoke different languages, they were divided into different assemblies, in which every man heard in his own tongue the wonderful works of God. As some time elapsed after the day of Pentecost before the Apostles went forth to preach the Gospel to the nations of the world, unless there were in Jerusalem believers who spoke different languages, the gift of tongues which the Apostles had received would have been useless during this interval. We have seen that, from their number, the primitive disciples must have been divided into several congregations, and we now see that, if the number had been smaller, the formation of distinct societies was necessary for the purpose of edification. We have therefore one church, made up of several congregations, according to the Presbyterial plan, not a number of independent assemblies, possessing each the powers of a church in itself.

To strengthen our argument, let us observe that, in the Church of Jerusalem, many persons were employed in performing the ordinary ministrations. It is certain that all the Apostles continued in it for a considerable time after it was founded. It appears that with them were associated prophets, or inspired men, who foretold future events, or explained by supernatural assistance the predictions of the Old Testament; and we read of the elders or presbyters of that church, or ordinary ministers of the word, as this title usually imports, and as Independents will grant; for they deny that there is any such office-bearer by divine appointment as a ruling, distinct from a preaching, elder. Now, I should wish to be informed by them, how all these persons were employed? What were twelve Apostles, several prophets, and a competent number of ministers, doing? Independents tell us that they had only one congregation; but if so, how could they find scope for the exercise of their gifts? The Christians in Jerusalem could not be always hearing sermons, because they had their worldly affairs to attend to; but unless the Apostles and their assistants, were engaged in preaching from morning to night, on every day of the week, the turn of each must have come at distant intervals, and during a considerable part of their time they must have been idle, in respect of this most important duty of their office. We find, however, that this was not the case. The Apostles were so much occupied with preaching, that they found it impossible to pay attention to the affairs of the poor; and hence, when complaints arose that some were neglected, they instituted the order of deacons: "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables: wherefore, brethren, look ye out seven men whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."* It is a downright absurdity to suppose that so many preachers could have been kept in constant employment by a single congregation; and every man who lays aside prejudice, and judges dispassionately, will be of this opinion. No rational account can be given of so many office-bearers, not sinecurists, but active labourers in the work of the gospel, remaining in Jerusalem, except by admitting that the disciples were divided into many congregations.

The last argument for the existence of more congregations than one in Jerusalem, is founded on the want of a place in which all the disciples could assemble. To this argument Independents have a ready answer, that they could be contained in the temple, and that it appears that the Apostles preached in it daily. It is

* Acts v. 42. † Ib. iv. 31, 32. ‡ Ib. v. 12, 13. ‖ Ib. vi. 1.

* Acts vi. 2—4.

easy for some men to get rid of a difficulty by a few general assertions, especially when they are talking of something very remote, into all the particulars of which we cannot enter; but capacious as the temple was, it is not certain that ten or twelve thousand could have frequently gone into it, without incommoding the multitudes of unconverted Jews who went up to it to worship. It is not certain that the priests and rulers would have permitted acknowledged assemblies of the disciples, whom they accounted heretics and apostates, to be held within its precincts. The contrary is, I think, highly probable; and we may be sure that an attempt to commemorate the death of Christ, by the celebration of the Eucharist, would have been immediately resisted. The Apostles, indeed, preached daily in the temple; not, however, to the whole church of Jerusalem, but to the Jews whom they accidentally found in it; and this is evident from the words of the sacred historian, who says, that they preached "daily in the temple, and in every house;"* that is, while they preached to the Jews, in the temple, they preached in private houses to the Christians, and consequently, had many congregations. These observations are obvious to the plainest understanding; and nothing but the blinding power of prejudice can prevent any man from perceiving their truth.

LECTURE XCIX.

ON THE CHURCH.

Independent and Presbyterian forms of Church Government Examined.—Proof that the Power of the Church Rulers does not flow from the People.—Opinions of Dr. Owen.—Argument against Independency from the Council of Jerusalem.—Superiority of the Presbyterian Plan.

In the preceding lecture, I entered upon the consideration of the two forms of ecclesiastical government, which alone seem to receive any countenance from Scripture, Presbytery and Independency; and proposed to discuss them together, because the establishment of the one necessarily involves the overthrow of the other.

We have examined the first principle of Independency, from which it derives its name, that each congregation of Christians is a complete church, possessing in itself all the powers and privileges which Jesus Christ has conferred upon the church, and unconnected with all other churches in the world, except by a common profession of the faith. We have seen that this principle does not apply to the Church of Jerusalem, which has appeared, from several arguments, to have consisted of more congregations than one. We might draw the same conclusion with respect to some other churches mentioned in the New Testament; but your attention has been confined to that of Jerusalem, because its history is more fully detailed.

The obvious inference from the fact, that in Jerusalem there were several congregations, which are nevertheless represented as one church, is, that those congregations were incorporated, or so united by some common tie, as to compose only one body. Now, this could be no other than the same government, to which these congregations were subject; as the inhabitants of different cities and provinces constitute one nation, not simply by living in the same country, but by obeying the same laws, and acknowledging the authority of the same civil rulers. Independents could not, consistently with their principles, have spoken of the *Church* of Jerusalem, but must have adopted a different phraseology, if they had composed the narrative in the Acts, and have said, the *churches* of Jerusalem. It follows, therefore, that there was a presbytery in Jerusalem, composed of the Apostles and elders, who came together, as we see from the fifteenth chapter, to manage the affairs of all the congregations in the city, and to whose decrees they were bound to submit. This is the most rational account of the matter; and it is so natural, that it follows from the particulars mentioned in the history, without any effort; whereas Independents are compelled to have recourse to a variety of awkward expedients, to make out their favourite point, that there was only one congregation; and in particular, to reduce the believers in that city to the lowest possible number. And thus, what is gained to their cause, is lost to Christianity; which, if they are right in their calculations with respect to Jerusalem and other cities, had very little success in the primitive ages, and could boast of only handfuls of converts in the most populous places.

I now proceed to consider the second principle of Independency, which is, That all power is vested in the church collective, or in the body of the faithful; that to them the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed; and that those who exercise any authority in the church, in the character of rulers, derive it from the people. In opposition to this principle, Presbyterians maintain, That the power of governing the church belongs exclusively to certain office-bearers, who derive their authority from Jesus Christ, and are accountable to him alone for the exercise of it. They are not, indeed, lords over God's heritage, but helpers of the faith and joy of the saints; and are their servants, but only in this sense, that the object of all their ministrations should be, the spiritual good of those who are committed to their care.

The constitution of the church differs from that of a civil society. A voluntary society is formed by the free consent of the members. Each of them has certain rights which he is desirous to secure, and to enlarge by the co-operation of others; and he therefore unites with them upon such terms as seem best calculated to promote the common design. They proceed in concert to compose a code of laws, and to appoint certain persons who shall have authority to execute the laws, and to manage the affairs of the society. In such cases, power necessarily emanates from the people. The society is created by them for their own benefit; and the rulers owe their official existence solely to the deed of their constituents, which is the source of their power, and prescribes its limits. Here, the society is before the rulers; but with respect to the church, the rulers were before the society; and no reasoning, therefore, from the one case, is fairly applicable to the other. There was no church when our Lord gave the Apostles their commission; when he committed to Peter, and to them all, the keys of the kingdom of heaven; when he invested them with authority to preach the gospel, to administer the ordinances, and to exersise discipline over his professed disciples. They were appointed immediately by him; and they were appointed as the first in a long succession, which was to continue to the end of time, as we learn from his promise to them; "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."* The office of the Apostles was extraordinary, and ceased at their death; but, besides the gifts of inspiration and of miracles, they were possessed of ordinary powers, for the edification and government of the church, which did not expire with them, but passed into other hands. The pastors, and teachers, and rulers, who existed in the primitive times, and can never be wanting, without the dissolution of the church as an organized body, were appointed by the Apostles. They were set apart to their office, and through them, as the channel in which power was conveyed to them from Christ, the source of all spiritual gifts and privileges.

* Acts v. 42.

* Matth. xxviii. 20.

This is the channel of transmission which was established in the beginning. As we are reasoning with Independents, who pretend to pay a more sacred regard to Scripture than other denominations of Christians, we confidently appeal to it, and ask, whether they can deny the statement now made, or show that the original order has been changed? Is it not true, that the Apostles derived their power immediately from Jesus Christ? Is it not true, that the first ministers and rulers of the church derived their authority from the Apostles? And can any passage be produced reversing this order, and ordaining that in the subsequent ages, official power should flow from the people? The first governors of the church were not created by it, but received their official character before its erection. They did not, as in other voluntary societies, exercise a portion of power which the society had delegated to them. Their power came directly from heaven, and was given to them, that they might organize the society, and govern the members; not by laws of their own making, but by a code stamped with the authority of the King of Zion. In the New Testament, the people are known, not as rulers, but as subjects. It is acknowledged, that it recognizes a right in the people to interfere in the appointment of their office-bearers, to a certain extent. In many churches, they have been deprived of that right; but in the days of the Apostles, and for a long time after, they possessed and exercised the privilege of electing the persons who were to preside over them in the Lord. But the limits of this right are defined with the greatest exactness; so as to show that it does not recognize any portion of authority as vested in the people, and far less represents them as the depositaries of all ecclesiastical power. The account which Luke gives of the election of deacons, is so expressed, as if it had been intended to guard against the principles of Independents: "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."* The people were called upon to choose persons whom they judged to be qualified, and in whom they could confide; and it was the more necessary that they should be consulted in the election, because there had been dissatisfaction in consequence of the former management of the poor. This, however, was a simple nomination, and here their power terminated. They could not invest the persons with the office, and give them authority to discharge its duties. This was the prerogative of the Apostles; it was their province to "appoint them over this business." In other words, it appears from this account, that official power is not derived from the people, but from those who are already in office.

I shall here quote a passage from the writing of the celebrated Dr. Owen, who was an Independent, but has admitted principles on the subject of church government, which are more congenial to the views of a professed Presbyterian. In his True Nature of a Gospel Church, after having shown that Christ has instituted offices in his church; that he qualifies persons for them; that he communicates power to them by their call and ordination, and commands the church to be subject to them; he adds, "By these ways and means doth the Lord Christ communicate office-power unto them that are called thereunto; whereon they become, not the officers or ministers of men, no, not of the church, as unto the actings and exercise of their authority, but only as the good and edification of the church is the end of it; but the officers and ministers of Christ himself. It is hence evident that, in the communication of church power in office, unto any persons called thereunto, the work and duty of the church consists formally in acts of obedience unto the commands of Christ. Hence, it doth not give unto such officers a power or authority which was formally and actually in the body of the community, by virtue of any grant or law of Christ, so as that they should receive and act the power of the church, by virtue of a delegation from them; but only they design, choose, and set apart the individual persons, who are thereon intrusted with office-power by Christ himself, according as was before declared. This is the power and right given unto the church, essentially considered, with respect unto their officers, namely, to design, call, choose, and set apart the persons, by the ways of Christ's appointment, unto those offices, whereunto, by his laws, he hath annexed church power and authority."* He says again, in another part of the same work, speaking of the election of the pastors and rulers by the people, "This choice or election doth not communicate a power from them that choose, unto them that are chosen, as though such a power as that whereunto they are called should be formally inherent in the choosers, antecedent unto such a choice. For this would make those that are chosen to be their ministers only, and to act all things in their name, and by virtue of authority derived from them. It is only an instrumental, ministerial means, to instate them in that power and authority which is given unto such officers by the constitution and laws of Christ, whose ministers they thereon are. These gifts, offices, and officers, being granted by Christ unto the churches, wherever there is a church called according to his mind, they do, in and by their choice of them, submit themselves unto them in the Lord, according to all the powers and duties wherewith they are by him intrusted, and whereunto they are called."† These quotations are long, but they are important; and have the greater weight, as coming from an avowed Independent, who, in learning, piety, and profound knowledge of the Scriptures, was never surpassed by any of his brethren. They contain the essential principles of Presbytery, and show that, when such a man dispassionately examined the Scriptures, he found in them the elements of that system of government which our church has adopted.

There are other arguments by which we prove that power is not lodged in the members of the church, and by them imparted to its office-bearers; but that the latter derive it immediately from Christ. When Paul says, that Christ has given to his church "pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, and the edifying of his body,"‡ it certainly would not occur to a person whose mind was not biassed by previous notions, that his meaning is, that Christ has given power to the church to create such ministers by its own deed. The words would naturally suggest, that the church and the ministers are distinct from each other; that the church is merely the society for whose benefit provision was to be made; that the Head of the church has manifested his attention to its interests, by appointing persons to instruct and govern it; and that the rights and prerogatives of its office-bearers emanate directly from himself. No man, when he was told that a king had appointed the governor of the province, would conclude that the governor was appointed by the people, and possessed no power but what they had conferred upon him. "God hath set some in the church, first, Apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifs of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."‖ While this passage suggests that teachers are set in the church, not by the people, but by God, and the word government, which is the abstract for the concrete, imports, that there is authority to be exercised, as well as knowledge to be communicated, it is worthy of observation, that God is said to have "set *some* in the church;" not *all*, but a certain number of persons, for the various

* Acts vi. 3.

* Owen's True Nature of a Gospel Church, chap. iii. p. 39.
† Ib. chap. iv. p. 77. ‡ Eph. iv. 11, 12. ‖ 1 Cor. xii. 28

purposes mentioned. But how does this comport with the principles of Independents, according to whom all possess an original right to govern; all do actually govern, as no cause can be decided but by the suffrages of the church; and those who bear official names are, in fact, as subject to its authority as others; for as it made, so it can unmake them at its pleasure? In an Independent church all are governors, and there are none to be governed but the individuals who have done something which has brought them under the cognizance of their brethren, and exposed them to censure.

I shall only add, that the Scripture speaks of persons in the church, whom it calls pastors, overseers, leaders, elders who rule; and that it calls upon the members to "know" or acknowledge them, to "submit" to them, to "obey them," to "esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake," and to "count them worthy of double honour."* The titles of the office-bearers import authority; but they would be merely titles of honour and empty sounds, if all power were vested in the people, and the nominal rulers were their servants, whom they had a right to control. The duty of the people would be confined to sentiments of affection, and an external show of respect. According to the Independent system, they owe no obedience to their rulers, who are, in fact, such only in name, as the people retain the rule in their own hands. How shall they obey those who can issue no command, and submit to those who have no authority to exercise? The language of Scripture is absolutely unmeaning, if all power resides in the people; but is perfectly intelligible upon the Presbyterian plan, which clearly distinguishes between the governors and the governed.

To this reasoning, Independents oppose some passages of Scripture which seem to them to recognize a power of government and discipline in the body of the people. Thus, our Lord says, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."† The ultimate appeal, say Independents, is to the church, and by the assembled church the offender is judged and excommunicated. Let it be observed, that when these words were spoken, the Christian church was not founded; and that, consequently, they would have been unintelligible to the disciples, unless they had alluded to some mode of proceeding with which they were acquainted. Now, I think that no dispassionate person can doubt that the allusion is to the Jewish synagogue, the constitution of which bore a close resemblance to that of a Presbyterian congregation. It was composed of two classes of persons,—the people, who met together to hear the law read and expounded, and the rulers, who presided over this assembly. The latter are frequently mentioned in the New Testament; and we learn from the writings of the Jews, that their office consisted in teaching and governing, and that the government comprehended the regulation of all the ordinary proceedings of the synagogue, the care of the poor, and the judging and excommunicating of offenders. "Tell it," says Christ, "to the church," in the same way in which such cases are told to the synagogue; that is, 'bring it before the rulers of the church, that they may deal with the obstinate brother, and expel him if he will not submit.' If our Lord intended to give a rule for the future conduct of his disciples when his church should be established, he plainly signified that the mode of treating offenders should be taken from the model of the synagogue; and his words, instead of favouring the Independent notion, that the people are the depositories of power, import that it is vested in the rulers alone, and that to them exclusively the government belongs. Thus the passage is in unison with those from which it has appeared, that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were granted to the Apostles, and their successors in the care of the church.*

The other passage which seems to recognize the power of the people, is in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, when, speaking of the incestuous person, the Apostle commands them, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when they were gathered together, and his spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver him unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh."† And in the second Epistle, he speaks of this punishment as "having been inflicted by many."‡ It is worthy of attention, that from this case, which was evidently peculiar, no legitimate inference can be drawn respecting the ordinary procedure of the church. The Corinthians had neglected to do their duty, and Paul, interposing by his apostolical authority, pronounced a sentence, and called upon them to execute it. It was Paul, and not the Corinthians, who excommunicated the incestuous man; and their office consisted in publishing the sentence in their assembly, and acting conformably to it, by excluding him from their fellowship. There is no recognition of power in that church to judge and censure; their business was merely ministerial. This I consider as the proper explanation of the passage, which, thus viewed, gives no countenance to Independents. The common answer, however, is satisfactory; that, on the supposition that the sentence was pronounced by the Corinthians, the address to the whole church does not necessarily imply that they were all judicially concerned, because there are many examples of addresses to a whole society or people, when only a part is intended, or only the rulers. The congregation of Israel is said to have done what was certainly done only by persons in authority, and the people are spoken to as chargeable with sins which their rulers alone had committed. In such cases, we must ascertain from circumstances what persons are meant; and the case before us must be explained consistently with other passages which appropriate power to the governors of the church. At the same time, it should be remembered that all the members of the church had a part to act in the excommunication of the offender, not however as judges; but they were all bound to concur in the sentence, and to testify their approbation of it by refusing to associate with him. Thus the punishment was, in the most emphatic sense, inflicted by many.

I proceed to consider the last principle of Independency, That all acts of government are performed in a single congregation, ultimately, and without appeal to a superior assembly. Presbyterians maintain that there is a subordination of courts, and a right of appeal from an inferior to a superior court. This seems to be a fair deduction from what we have already established concerning the union of several congregations in one church. Being separate assemblies, each of which possesses its own rulers, they can be considered as one only, because they are united under one general government; and there are two ways in which their union may be effected, namely, by their being placed under a bishop, or under a presbytery. We have proved that, in the Apostolic age, there were no bishops, in the modern sense of the word; and it follows that the Church of Jerusalem, in which there were many assemblies, was governed by the common council of its presbyters. Each assembly regulated

* 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Tim. v. 17.
† Matth. xviii. 15—17.

* Vitringa de Synagogo Vetere, 96, 734. † 1 Cor v. 4.
‡ 2 Cor. ii. 6.

its own ordinary affairs; but when any extraordinary case arose, or any difficulty occurred, it was referred to that council, and decided by its authority. No reasonable objection can be made to this view of the subject; and if it be admitted to be just, the principle must be given up that a single congregation possesses in itself all the powers of government, and is independent of all other congregations in the world.

This argument would hold good although we should not be able to produce from Scripture, proof of an appeal from an inferior to a superior court. But Presbyterians think that they are furnished with an example in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, and that, by the transaction there recorded, the lawfulness of courts of review is clearly established. I shall examine that passage of Scripture; and show you what countenance it gives to the plan of ecclesiastical government which we have adopted.

Some persons from Judea had taught the brethren in Antioch, that "unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved."* As this doctrine was subversive of the Gospel, Paul and Barnabas opposed them, and much contention ensued. It was found impossible to settle the controversy, even by the authority of Paul, to whom the false teachers refused to submit; and it was therefore determined to refer it to the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem. Besides, it was not a local controversy, arising from the peculiar circumstances of the place, but might be agitated in any other city or district where the Jews resided; and for this reason, prudence required that it should be finally decided in a higher assembly than that of the rulers of Antioch, an assembly which would command the respect and obedience of all the churches in the world. There is no doubt that it might have been determined in Antioch, in which, besides Paul and Barnabas, both men of high rank in the church, there were prophets and teachers competent to manage such affairs; but the opposing party was refractory, and there was no hope of reducing them to silence except by the sentence of a court from which there was no appeal.

It was resolved that "Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and elders about this question."† Whether these were delegates from the other churches of Syria, and from those of Cilicia, in which this controversy was agitated, does not appear. If it should be denied that any such were present, because no specific mention is made of them, those who are most concerned to prove their absence, lest the meeting in Jerusalem should turn out to be a representative assembly, will be involved in an inextricable difficulty. It is evident, that in the present case, there was not merely a reference for advice, but submission to a sentence: and how the elders of Jerusalem could have a right to legislate for the church of Antioch, it is impossible for Independents upon their own principles to explain. One Independent church may apply to another for advice, but it still retains the power to receive or reject it. The church to which the application is made, may give counsel to the other, but has no authority to enforce it. We shall find that something very different took place on the occasion now before us.

It has been said that the reason for referring this cause to the Church of Jerusalem, was that the Apostles were there, who were inspired men, and could decide this question by infallible authority, and that this was the ground of the submission of other churches to their sentence. But this supposition is of no avail to the cause of Independency, because it appears not to be founded in truth. First, if it had been the wish of the Church of Antioch, that the dispute should be terminated by the authority of inspiration, there was no reason for sending to Jerusalem, as Paul was among them, who was not behind the chief of the Apostles, and Barnabas, who was endowed with supernatural gifts; and there were also prophets, as we are informed in the fourteenth chapter, who enjoyed the miraculous assistance of the Spirit. Their decision would have been infallible, and it would have been the duty of all parties to acquiesce in it. Secondly, if it should be said, that although there were inspired men in Antioch, yet parties had run so high, and such prejudices had been conceived, that a decision there would not have had the effect to settle the peace of the church, and that this was the cause of the reference to Jerusalem; I observe, that while this is probably a true statement of the case, there is no evidence that the reference was made to the Apostles as infallible judges. The reason of this allegation is, that it was made at the same time to the elders who were not inspired. If the Apostles were consulted as oracles, why were the elders also consulted who were not oracles? What right had they to interfere in a sentence proceeding from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost? Were the Christians in Antioch so ignorant, as to confound two classes of persons totally dissimilar, and to assign to both equal authority? If the Apostles spoke by inspiration, the elders must have been silent, and they had only to submit, like the parties who had made the appeal. Nothing however is more evident than that the elders were considered as judges, as well as the Apostles. Thirdly, when the question came to be discussed, the assembly proceeded not in the way of authority, but by reasoning. No person rose and pronounced an oracular sentence; but first one Apostle stood up, and then another, and drew from passages of Scripture a conclusion in which all present acquiesced. The business was conducted in the same manner as in other assemblies. Every member had liberty to give his opinion, and that which was supported by solid arguments was adopted.

But although the Christians of Antioch did not send to Jerusalem, to obtain a decision of the question by inspiration, they sought something more than an advice. They submitted the controversy to an authority in which they were bound to acquiesce; and, accordingly, the assembly did not give them a counsel, but issued a *decree*; so their sentence is called in the next chapter, and the word thus translated is the same which is used to express the authoritative mandates of superiors. The decree of Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed, is called by the same name, δογμα; and it is twice employed to denote the ordinances of the Mosaic law. The matters contained in the decree are termed necessary things, things which the churches were not simply advised, but commanded to observe. The obligation of the decree upon the Christians of Antioch, and not upon them alone, but upon all the churches of Syria and Cilicia, and throughout the world, could not arise from the authority of the elders of Jerusalem, even although it had been strengthened by the suffrages of the people, according to the principles of either Independents or Presbyterians. Neither will acknowledge the right of one church to dictate to another, its equal in power and privileges. And the eagerness of Independents to make us believe, that the question was determined in a church meeting, in their sense of the term, only serves to embarrass them the more; for how could the members of one church issue a decree, which should be binding upon all Christian churches? The fact, however, presents no difficulty to us. There were present on this occasion, not only the elders of Jerusalem, but probably deputies from the other churches, which were interested in the controversy; and some suppose these to be meant by the brethren, mentioned in the superscription of the decree. As this point is doubtful, I shall not insist upon it, nor is it necessary to the argument.

* Acts xv. 1. † Ib. 2.

Besides the elders, the Apostles were members of the council, and their presence was sufficient to constitute it an Ecumenical one, and to render its decrees universally binding. We have, indeed, said that they did not act by inspiration in pronouncing the sentence; but they did not therefore sink down to a level with the other members. Although they reasoned in concert with them, and on other occasions assumed the designation of presbyters or elders, and joined with the ordinary pastors and rulers in administering the affairs of the church, they never did nor could divest themselves of their apostolical character. They had at all times the care of all the churches, and on every public occasion, acted in behalf of them all. In this council they were considered as Apostles; and consequently, if deputies from other churches were not present, the Apostles supplied their place, being the representatives of the Catholic Church. Thus the meeting in Jerusalem became a general council, which had a right to give law to the disciples of Christ in every region of the earth.

It is objected by Independents, that this meeting did not resemble a Presbyterian synod, in which only ministers and elders have a right to deliberate and judge; for that the people also took a part in the business. "The Apostles and elders with the whole church, were pleased to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch;" the letter is superscribed by "the Apostles, elders, and brethren," and "all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul." But "the multitude" can mean only the people who had convened to witness the proceedings, and who listened to the narrative with profound attention. The "whole church," or the whole assembly, must signify only the persons present, who could be but a part of the church properly so called, which we have seen consisted of many thousands; and consequently, even upon the principles of Independents, they have no judicial authority. The "brethren" have been understood to be other ministers of the word; but, admitting that they were the people, we can rationally conceive nothing more to be intended, than that they concurred in the decree, and signified their consent to the foreign churches as a means of obtaining their acquiescence; in the same manner as the laity were sometimes permitted, in ancient times, to subscribe the decrees of councils, in order to testify their approbation of them.* This is the conclusion to which we must come, if we attentively and candidly consider the whole history of this meeting, and would render one part consistent with another. The reference from Antioch was not made to the whole body of believers in Jerusalem, but to the Apostles and elders; it is expressly stated that "the Apostles and elders came together to consider the matter," and the multitude are only incidentally mentioned as present; and, although the brethren are conjoined with them in the beginning of the letter sent to the churches, yet when delivered to them, it is called the decree, exclusively of the Apostles and elders. It is worthy of attention, too, that we do not find a single member of the church taking part in the discussion. From these particulars, it seems to be a necessary conclusion, that the people had no concern in the discussion and determination of the question; and that, although the church and the brethren are afterwards brought forward to view, their appearance being posterior to the sentence, can reasonably be understood to import only their approbation of it. This explanation will recommend itself to a candid inquirer, because it harmonizes the different parts of the narrative; whereas, the opposite opinion represents Luke as writing in a careless and inaccurate manner, while, in the successive steps of the process, he studiously excludes the people from the office of judges, and then abruptly admits them at the close.

If any of you should be of opinion that the assembly in Jerusalem has not been proved to be conformable in every point to a Presbyterian synod, we would say to him, that we do not pretend to trace a perfect similarity, but that we have established the principle upon which such synods are founded. There was in this case, a reference from an inferior to a superior assembly, and the design was to obtain, not a simple advice, but an authoritative decision. We have, therefore, apostolical example for courts of review. The transaction clearly recognizes the system of subordination, and justifies the transference of a cause from the consistory, or session of a particular congregation to a presbytery, and from a presbytery to an assembly of presbyteries, which the Greeks call a synod, and the Latins a council. And thus we have disproved the last principle of Independency, that all acts of government are performed in a single congregation, ultimately, and without appeal.

The advantage, and even the necessity of courts of review have been acknowledged by some enlightened Independents; and Dr. Owen, the brightest ornament of the party, has not hesitated to declare, that a church, meaning a single congregation, cannot always perform its duty to Christ and the Catholic Church by its intrinsic powers; that, in attempting to do so, it cuts itself off from the communion of the church universal, and that it would not be safe for any man to commit himself to its care.* When this passage was, sometime ago, brought under the notice of the public,† it gave great offence to Independents, who were not aware that it was to be found in his writings, and would willingly, if they could, have disputed its genuineness, because it aims a mortal blow at their scheme. But so he thought, and so every man who takes a dispassionate view of the subject will think. Modern Independents partially acknowledge its truth in their practice, for the associations which are generally established among them, are an imitation of our presbyteries and synods. They profess, indeed, to have no authority over the churches, of the delegates from which they are composed, and to meet solely to consult about their affairs, and to give them an advice; but the power which they disclaim in words, they exercise in fact; for, if any church does not consent to what has been agreed upon, it is, I understand, cut off from their communion.

There are some weighty objections which may be urged against the Independent system. First, It destroys the visible unity of the church, by frittering it away into a multitude of little societies, separate and unconnected. It is a matter of lamentation to good men, that Christians are divided into so many parties, which have no intercourse with each other; but this state of things is the consequence of imperfect views of the truth, of prejudice, passion, and secular interests; and all acknowledge that it is not as it ought to be. But Independency upon principle parcels out the followers of Christ into distinct portions, and pronounces their incorporation into one body to be contrary to Scripture. Instead of exhibiting the church as the one kingdom of Christ, it distributes it into an endless variety of little republics. Secondly, It lodges the power of managing the affairs of the church in incompetent hands. Men may be qualified to be members of a Christian society, who are altogether unfit to be rulers. The grace of God may exist in a mind which has received no culture from education, and is very scantily endowed with natural gifts. A person may know the truth by Divine illumination, so as to believe and love it, and may know the wickedness and

* Grotii Annotat. ad Acta Apostol. xv. 22.

* Owen's True Nature of a Gospel Church, chap. xi.

† Lectures on the Acts, lect. xvi.

deceitfulness of his own heart, who is very imperfectly acquainted with the characters, and tempers, and ways of men. There is an absurdity in supposing that day-labourers, who perhaps can hardly read; domestic servants, who are so much engaged from morning to night, that they can, with difficulty, find time to look into the Bible; and women, living in a state of seclusion, or holding intercourse only with persons as ill-informed as themselves, are proper persons to discuss and determine the intricate cases which may come before a church. The Presbyterian plan is evidently more rational, which commits the government to the ministers of Christ, and elders chosen for their superior knowledge, and prudence, and experience. Lastly, It provides no means for determining controversies. If the members of an Independent congregation differ in opinion, they must wrangle on without the prospect of an end, or must withdraw from each other, and set up separate churches. In this way their disputes frequently terminate, and not seldom they have kept their churches in an agitated state for many weeks and months. In our church courts, unanimity is more likely to be obtained; if the decision of one court does not give satisfaction, a cause can be brought under the review of another. There is, besides, a greater probability of candid investigation and impartial decision, as the judges are not immediately interested; and while all questions are submitted to the rulers, the minds of the members are left in peace.

LECTURE C.

ON THE CHURCH.

Rulers of the Church.—Extraordinary Office-Bearers: Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists.—Ordinary Office-Bearers: Pastor; His Duties:—Teacher or Doctor; His Duties:—Deacons:—Ruling Elders; Warrant for them; Their Duties.

I HAVE endeavoured to show you, from the Scriptures, what form of government Jesus Christ has prescribed to his church, and it has appeared, I trust, that we find in them the outlines of the Presbyterian plan. It is acknowledged that it is not so fully detailed as the plan given to the Jewish Church, which contains a minute account of the tabernacle, of its services, of the persons who alone had a right to minister in it, and, in short, of every thing which related to religion: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."* This is the reason that there have been so many disputes upon the subject. As only general principles are laid down, they have been viewed in different lights, and men have reared upon them different superstructures. But if the principles are clear, they furnish a rule to guide us in the development of the system; and the scheme which we have adopted, is, I think, fairly deduced from them, in all its ramifications.

I now proceed to lay before you a short account of the persons whom Christ has appointed to administer this government. The Apostle Paul has given an enumeration of them in the Epistle to the Ephesians; which, however, is not complete, because there are two orders which he has omitted, but which are mentioned in other passages of the New Testament: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."† They are divided into two classes, the extraordinary and the ordinary office-bearers of the church. In the first class are included apostles, prophets, and evangelists; and we call them extraordinary, not only because they were endowed with supernatural gifts, but because they were instituted only for a time. They were ordained to serve a particular purpose, namely, the establishment of the Christian church; and when this design was accomplished, their offices ceased. The ordinary office-bearers of the church are pastors and teachers, and to these must be added ruling elders and deacons.

The apostles stand first in the catalogue, and they hold the highest rank among the ministers of the church. The word signifies a messenger, a person sent to execute a commission. In this sense it was used by the Greeks, and it occurs also in some places of the New Testament: "The servant is not greater than his lord, neither *he that is sent*—αποστολος—greater than he that sent him."‡ Paul speaking to the Corinthians, of certain brethren who had been deputed to receive the collections for the saints, calls them αποστολοι εκκλησιων, "the messengers" or "apostles of the churches."† The same title is given to Jesus Christ himself, who is called "the Apostle of our profession,"‡ because he was sent by the Father to publish the religion which we profess; and hence he said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me."‖ In the same general sense the term is applied to the twelve disciples, who are known by the designation of Apostles; but it is, at the same time, expressive of something peculiar respecting them.

We may remark, in the first place, that they received their commission immediately from Jesus Christ himself, first during his personal ministry, when he sent them to publish the good news of the kingdom throughout the land of Judea;§ and again after his ascension, when he commanded them to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."¶ With respect to Paul, who was afterwards added to the number, he is careful to inform us, that his commission was of the same nature with that of his brethren: "Paul, an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."** The case of Matthias, who was nominated by the Apostles to fill up the place of Judas, is not an exception; for a direct appeal was made to Christ; and after prayer, the lot fell upon him.†† Secondly, it was an indispensable qualification of an Apostle that he should have been an eye and an ear witness of the actions and sayings of Christ, and that he should have seen him after his resurrection, as we learn from the words of Peter, when they were deliberating about a successor to Judas.‡‡ Paul, indeed, was not in all respects so qualified; but what was essential was supplied by the personal appearance of our Saviour to him, and the revelation with which he was favoured: "Have not I seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"‖‖ Thirdly, They were endowed with supernatural gifts, with a complete and infallible knowledge of the gospel; a power to speak languages which they had not learned; to work miracles; to discern spirits; and in all these ways, to give full proof of their commission. They were authorized to preach to Jews and to Gentiles; to found the Christian Church; to instruct and govern it; to order all its affairs, independently of any human controul; and to provide for its well-being and continuance, by appointing office-bearers to administer the ordinances, and to perform all the services which would conduce to its peace and spiritual prosperity. Their doctrine and commands were the rule to the church during their life, and their writings are the standard of faith and practice to all succeeding ages. They left no successors in their extraordinary prerogatives, and their office expired with them.

The next in order were the prophets. The word

* Heb. viii. 5.

† Eph. iv. 11, 12.

* John xiii. 16.
‖ John vii. 16.
** Gal. i. 1.
‖‖ 1 Cor. ix. 1.
† 2 Cor. viii. 23.
§ Matth. x. 5.
†† Acts i. 24, 26.
‡ Heb. iii. 1.
¶ Mark xvi. 15.
‡‡ Ib. i. 21, 22.

prophet bears various senses in the Scriptures. It sometimes signifies merely a person who speaks in the name of another, as Aaron is called the prophet of Moses,* because he delivered to the people the messages which Moses had received from God. At other times, it denotes a person who, by the assistance of the Spirit, explained the prophecies of the Old Testament; and there is reason to believe that there are several instances of this use of it in the New Testament. The prophets there mentioned, did not always foretell future events, but edified the church by interpreting the ancient predictions. They are not, however, to be viewed as exactly on a level with the commentators of modern times. They were supernaturally assisted, and were infallible guides in the application of the Scriptures to Jesus Christ, and the new dispensation. Their office must have been productive of great benefit to the primitive church, when the Messiahship of Christ was the grand subject of controversy between the Jews and the Christians, and the faith of the latter so much depended upon the proof, that all the circumstances descriptive of the promised Redeemer, were realized in the person and history of Jesus of Nazareth. Our Lord opened the understandings of his disciples to understand the Scriptures, and he imparted the same knowledge to those inspired expounders of prophecy. In strict language, a prophet signifies a person who, by the Holy Spirit, foretells future events. Such, unquestionably, were some of the prophets in the primitive church. This is evident from the eleventh chapter of the Acts, where we read, that "in those days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar."† Here an event was predicted which could not have been foreseen by human sagacity, because the natural causes of it were not then in operation. The other prophets from Jerusalem were of the same class; for Agabus is said to be one of them, and, therefore, to have exercised no power which was not possessed by them in common. The gift of prophecy might be subservient to the immediate advantage of the church, as in the case before us it gave warning to the disciples to make provision for their poor brethren against the approaching calamity; and it contributed with other supernatural endowments, to establish their faith, as an evidence of the presence of God with his servants.

The last extraordinary office-bearers in the primitive church were evangelists. There is an application of this word which is not authorized by Scripture, but is in common use, and has been inadvertently supposed to be one of its original meanings. It is the well known designation of the writers of the four gospels. It acquired this sense at a period posterior to the Apostolic age, and points out, not the official character of the persons to whom it is given, but the subject of their books. Mark calls his narrative, το ευαγγελιον Ιησου Χριστου.‡ The Evangelists of whom we now speak, were persons holding a high rank in the primitive church. Besides the passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians, already quoted, the word occurs in some other places. In the twenty-first chapter of the Acts, mention is made of Philip the Evangelist, and Timothy is exhorted to "do the work of an Evangelist."‖ Titus appears to have been invested with the same office, and so were probably Silas and Mark, who were companions of Paul in his journeys and labours, and Barnabas, who is also called an apostle, in the general sense of a messenger or missionary, and seems to have been more than an ordinary minister of the word. The peculiar duties of an Evangelist are not defined in the New Testament; but they are generally understood to have been materially the same with those of an Apostle. The Evangelist was not confined to a particular congregation, like the pastor afterwards mentioned; but had a general commission to preach the gospel wherever an opportunity presented itself. He had power to ordain elders in any city, and to set in order the affairs of the churches which he visited; to correct what was amiss, and to supply what was wanting. We do not know that he enjoyed the general gift of inspiration, as the Apostles did; and it is probable he did not, from the cases of Timothy and Titus, to whom Paul deemed it necessary to give instructions concerning their conduct. It may be presumed, that the honour of revealing the doctrines of the gospel, and delivering the commands and institutions of Christ to the church, was reserved to the Apostles; and that, by this prerogative, they were elevated above all the extraordinary office-bearers. We may suppose, however, that certain supernatural endowments were conferred upon an Evangelist, as the gift of tongues, and the power of working miracles, to authenticate his commission, and to enable him to discharge his duty among different nations. Evangelists were assistants of the Apostles, inferior to them in rank, and subject to their authority. Paul speaks to Timothy and Titus as their superior, and lays injunctions upon them, with which they were bound to comply. The Apostles were in number twelve, or rather thirteen, after Paul was added to them. Although they separated from one another, and chose different countries as the scene of their labours, and although they were unweariedly diligent in the work of their office; yet, when we consider how extensive was the range of their ministrations, we are sensible that, in most cases, they could do little more than found churches in particular places. If circumstances sometimes required that they should continue longer in a place, as we find Paul doing in Corinth and in Ephesus, other churches were deprived of the benefit of their presence. Infant societies, the members of which had been recently converted from Judaism and heathenism, were but imperfectly acquainted with the religion which they had embraced; and, being exposed to many difficulties and temptations, stood in need of more frequent and lasting visits than the numerous demands upon the attention of the Apostles would afford. Hence arose the order of Evangelists. They followed the Apostles, to carry on what the latter had begun. They went to those places where their presence was most wanted, and probably regulated their movements according to the direction of the Apostles. Paul, when he departed from Ephesus, besought Timothy to remain behind, that he might oppose certain false teachers; and he left Titus in Crete, "that he might set in order the things which were wanting."*

The extraordinary office-bearers of the church were apostles, prophets, and evangelists. We now proceed to consider the second class, which comprehends those who are to continue in the church to the end of the world. When the church had been founded by the preaching of the Apostles, regulated by the wisdom given to them, and established by their care, and the ministrations of prophets and evangelists; persons of an inferior character, possessed only of the common gifts of the Spirit, and guided by the instructions and rules which the Apostles have left, were sufficient to carry on the work of converting sinners, and building up saints in faith and holiness.

I shall speak of the ordinary office-bearers of the church.

The first are called Pastors. The word literally signifies a shepherd who has the care of a flock. It is

* Exod. vii. 1. † Acts xi. 27, 28.
‡ Mark i. 1. The Gospel of Jesus Christ. ‖ 2 Tim. iv. 5.

* 1 Tim. i. 3. Tit. i. 5.

here used in a metaphorical sense, and such use is not uncommon in profane writers. Homer, for example, calls kings ποιμενε λαων, *shepherds of the people*. It is applied to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is denominated "the chief Shepherd," and "the great Shepherd of the sheep;"* and to men who minister in holy things,† because he has delegated to them a portion of his authority, and they are employed in the same work. They are also styled ministers of Christ,‡ and the two titles may be used indiscriminately. It is therefore affectation in some sects to adhere rigidly to the former designation, always speaking of the pastors of their churches, as if the latter were not equally scriptural, especially as there is still another term sanctioned by the Apostles, namely bishops or overseers.

Two ideas are suggested by the designation of Pastors. It is the duty of those to whom it belongs, to feed and to govern the church. With respect to the first, we hear Paul saying to the elders of Ephesus, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."‖ As it is the office of a shepherd to provide proper pasture for his flock, and to lead them to it, so it is incumbent upon the minister of Christ to make provision for the nourishment of the souls of his people; and as it is only the truth which will sustain and strengthen spiritual life, he ought to "feed them with wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness." He is not appointed to instruct them in the arts and sciences, in agriculture and commerce, or in mere morality, as it is exhibited independently of religion in the systems of philosophers; but to preach the gospel in the most extensive sense of the term, to explain its doctrines, to propound its promises, to inculcate its precepts, to bring its motives to bear upon the consciences and hearts of his hearers. With careful attention to their different characters, and circumstances, and feelings, he must rightly divide the word of truth, not publishing it at random, but having a regard to the varieties among men in respect of their moral state, their duties, their temptations, and their difficulties, that each individual may receive his portion of food in due season. The general design of his office is also promoted by the administration of the sacraments, and particularly of the Lord's supper, the very name of which is significant of its fitness to impart nourishment to the soul. Thus, through the divine blessing, the people upon whom he bestows his labour will grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and the faithful minister will be indeed the pastor of his flock.

It belongs to the office of the pastor, not only to feed, but to govern the flock, as the shepherd regulates the movements of the sheep. "The good shepherd," says our Lord, "goeth before the sheep, and they follow him, for they know his voice."§ The Christian pastor should lead his flock in the right way, by instruction and by example; but this is not the whole of his office. He is invested with authority over them, to keep them in the right way, and to bring them back when they have wandered from it. He has power to reprove, and rebuke, and exhort, and to suffer no man to despise him. The church being an organized body, the peace and prosperity of which cannot be maintained without an observance of its laws, it pertains to those who are set over it, not only to inculcate the duty of the members, but to enforce it by all means corresponding with the voluntary and spiritual nature of the society. While the ministers of religion ought to watch over the people with affectionate solicitude, they have a commission from Jesus Christ to call upon them to walk according to the gospel, to censure them when they deviate from this rule, and to exclude those who will not be reclaimed. This power, however, is not vested exclusively in them, but in other governors of whom we shall afterwards speak; and it is evidently a power given to them, not for destruction, but for edification. Its object is to maintain the respect which is due to the institutions of Christ, to secure the consistent and seemly conduct of his professed disciples, to guard the privileges of the church against abuse, and to make an open distinction between the pure and the impure.

It is evident that the duties of the pastoral office may be performed, without the supernatural endowments which were bestowed upon apostles, prophets, and evangelists. The qualifications of a bishop, which are enumerated in the First Epistle to Timothy, are such as may be found in a person who possesses only the gifts of nature, improved by education and experience, and sanctified by grace. But it is not on this account alone that we rank pastors among the ordinary office-bearers in the church. Besides that no new effusion of the Holy Spirit, like that on the day of Pentecost, is necessary, and a sufficient number of able ministers will be regularly furnished in the common course of things, the circumstances of the church evidently require that their office should be continued throughout successive generations. As in the beginning Christianity was new both to Jews and to Gentiles, converts could not be supposed at once to acquire a perfect acquaintance with it; and many years elapsed before all the books of the New Testament were written, and came into general use. On these accounts it may seem that there was then a peculiar reason for the institution of the ministry. But its utility, or I may rather say its necessity, is manifest even in the present times, when the system of divine truth is accessible to private study, and is in some degree rendered familiar by early instruction. Still greater ignorance prevails from various causes, and however plain are those parts of the Scriptures, the knowledge of which is essential to salvation, preparatory education is requisite to the full exposition of it; and to many even its simplest truths would be unknown, if they never heard them in the church. Besides, the ministry of the word is not designed solely to tell what is new, but to bring old truths into view, and to impress them upon the heart; to give line upon line and precept upon precept; and it is one of the means which Jesus Christ has appointed for communicating his Spirit to illuminate and sanctify the soul. It is therefore a permanent institution; it will continue "till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."*

With pastors, Paul joins teachers in his enumeration of the office-bearers of the church. That these are not the same persons, as some might suppose, is evident from this consideration, that we have no reason to think that two words would have been employed to describe them, especially as the word, pastors, implies teaching, or the feeding of the flock by instruction. It is probable that a distinct class is pointed out, as many commentators think, and our church affirms. In the form of church government, there is a chapter entitled the Teacher or Doctor, which begins with these words: "The Scripture doth hold out the name and title of teacher, as well as of the pastor;" and after giving an account of his office, it concludes thus: "A teacher or doctor is of most excellent use in schools and universities, as of old in the schools of the prophets, and at Jerusalem, where Gamaliel and others taught as doctors." In the description of the office, it was too much confounded with that of the pastor, while the power of administering the sacrament is assigned to the teacher; and he is represented as differing from the pastor, not properly in office, but in the nature of his

* 1 Pet. v. 4. Heb. xiii. 20. † Eph. iv. 11.
‡ 1 Cor. iv. 1. 2 Cor. xi. 23. ‖ Acts xx. 28. § John x. 4.

* Eph. iv. 13.

gifts, being one "who doth more excel in exposition of the Scriptures, in teaching sound doctrine, and in convincing gainsayers, than he doth in application, and is accordingly employed therein." With all deference to the compilers of this part of our standards, I would say that this account is not very accurate. While it distinguishes between the pastor and doctor, it makes them virtually the same. In fact, the doctor has all the powers of a pastor, and differs from him only in his aptness for a particular part of the pastoral office. The distinction is not of office, but of qualifications. The doctor, I apprehend, was different from the pastor, and had a different province assigned to him. His business was not to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, but to instruct the young, and candidates for baptism, and those who, having been lately received into the church, were not yet fully initiated into the knowledge of religion. We know that, in the first ages, there were schools attached to certain churches, in which such persons were placed under the care of a teacher appointed by proper authority. There was a school of this nature in Alexandria, in which the celebrated Origen presided for a time. Similar schools were established in other places, as Rome, Antioch, Cæsarea, &c. There is probably a reference to the doctor in the following passage: "Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things;"* or, "let the catechumen,"—so those were called who were in a course of religious instruction,—"let the catechumen communicate to the catechist." We have no such person now in the church. Our schoolmasters, although they were under the superintendence of the rulers of a congregation, do not answer to the title; first, because they are not exclusively engaged in teaching the principles of religion; and, secondly, because they are not ecclesiastical officers, but belong to the laity. Doctors are not so necessary at present as they were in the primitive times, when Christianity was new, and the church was daily receiving accessions of converts from heathenism and Judaism, who needed to be prepared for admission by private instruction. Religious education may now be intrusted to parents and common teachers, aided by the personal diligence of young persons, and the attention which pastors are able to pay to them.

I proceed to speak of Deacons, of whose institution we have an account in the sixth chapter of the Acts: "When the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."† A complaint was made to the Apostles, who, in order to remedy the evil, commanded the disciples to look out among them seven men, duly qualified, whom they might appoint over this business. This was the origin of deacons, of whom mention is made in other places of the New Testament, and their qualifications are described. They were chosen to manage the affairs of the poor, to receive the contributions made for their use, to distribute them to the proper persons, and, no doubt, to accompany their acts of charity with exhortations and prayers. Their duty is expressed by the Apostles, when they say, "It is not meet that we should leave the word of God and serve tables."‡ These words have been understood to mean, that they were to serve the table of the poor, and the table of the Lord; and this commentary occurs in many books; but it is inaccurate, as it is evident from the whole transaction that only the table of the poor is intended. It is true, indeed, that, as the design of the institution was not to divert the attention of the Apostles from the ministry of the word, the care of all temporal matters in which the church is concerned, may be considered as belonging to deacons; but they were specially appointed solely for the poor. In some parts of the church, the office of deacon is retained, but in others it is not; and the want of it has been represented as a criminal omission. But the institution arose out of particular circumstances, and may therefore be dispensed with where these do not exist. In some congregations, there are no poor; in others, they are very few in number; and where they most abound, they can be attended to by the elders, whom we acknowledge as office-bearers in the church, as we shall afterwards see; and who, on the principle that an inferior office is comprehended in a superior, possess the powers of deacons, as ministers possess the powers of elders. This is our apology for not having deacons in all our congregations, and it seems to be satisfactory. They are not appointed, because all that they could do can be done by the elders, without encroaching upon their other duties.

The deacons of an Independent church, seem to have a general care of the members, and resemble our elders, as far as is consistent with the principle that all are rulers. But when they assign to them any other power than that of taking care of the poor, they deviate from the original institution; and while they deny that there is any warrant in Scripture for our elders, we may confidently reply that, at any rate, deacons as constituted by them are equally unscriptural. Apostolic deacons had no inspection of the church; their business was with the poor, and with the poor alone.

The last class of office-bearers in the church, consists of Ruling Elders; in speaking of whom it will be necessary to enter into greater detail, as the divine institution of such persons is controverted, by Episcopalians, who deem it incongruous that laymen, as they call them, should be admitted to any share in the government of the church; and by Independents, who maintain that the Scriptures make mention of no other officers besides pastors except deacons. It is acknowledged, that our information respecting the latter is more explicit and ample, as we have not only an account of their institution, but a description, in another place, of their qualifications. Still, however, we believe that there is a warrant for ruling elders, because there are some passages in which they appear to be distinctly recognized.

The first passage which I shall quote, is in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us; whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."* It is the opinion of many commentators, that prophesying, which sometimes signifies public teaching by the asistance of the Holy Spirit, and ministry, are general divisions under which the different offices of the church are arranged: that prophesying comprehends teaching and exhorting; and ministry, giving, ruling, and showing mercy. At any rate, it is plain that ruling is distinguished from teaching, exhorting, and giving, or from the peculiar work of the pastor, the doctor, and the deacon. The original term, προϊστάμενος, is properly translated, *he that ruleth*, because it evidently denotes one who presides over others with authority. This presidency is attributed to one as his proper business. It is his duty to preside or to rule, as it is the duty of another to teach, and of another to give. The Apostle is not enumerating the various duties of one individual, but different duties belonging to different individuals. Who, then, is ὁ προϊστάμενος? He is not the deacon, for the deacon does not rule, but gives to

* Gal. vi. 6. † Acts vi. 1. ‡ Ib. 2.

* Rom. xii. 6—8.

the poor; he is not the pastor, for, although the pastor rules, he is here characterized by teaching or exhorting, which is peculiar to him. Ὁ προϊστάμενος must therefore be a person whose whole duty consists in ruling, or, in other words, an elder, according to the views of Presbyterians. Some tell us, that his rule is over his family; but this is nothing to the purpose, and is a shift to get rid of a difficulty, because the Apostle is obviously speaking of the church. Others say, that he rules over the church stock; but they confound him with the deacon, who gives; and, besides, in this sense the expression would be indefinite and improper, there being nothing to determine the kind of rule to which the Apostle refers; and surely it will not be supposed that a deacon was held in such estimation in the primitive times, as to be called ὁ προϊστάμενος by way of eminence. There is another mode of evading the argument, by saying that the apostle is not speaking of offices and office-bearers but of gifts. Some pains have been taken to obviate this opinion, but without any necessity, because it is manifestly unfounded; and, at any rate, it does not answer the design of those who have adopted it. Paul does indeed make mention of gifts; but he immediately proceeds to consider them as bestowed upon particular persons, and speaks of those persons as plainly as one man can speak of another. Besides, although he were speaking of gifts, the argument is of the same force as if he were speaking of persons, for gifts are bestowed upon persons for particular purposes; and if there are gifts which qualify for ruling, as there are gifts which qualify for teaching, it follows, that to rule or govern is the exclusive duty of those upon whom the former are conferred. Every unprejudiced man must perceive the truth of this reasoning, and consequently must think that the evasion mentioned above is not worthy of notice.

The next passage to which I shall direct your attention, is in the twelfth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "God hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."* It does not follow, because some of the offices and ministrations enumerated in this place were miraculous and extraordinary, that they were all of that description; for we have already found apostles and prophets in the same catalogue with pastors and teachers; and we cannot be justly charged with wresting the passage from its design, when we consider it as specifying, in part, the ordinary office-bearers of the church. There are no persons who may be so reasonably supposed to be meant by helps, as deacons; and thus the word has been often explained. They were instituted for the express purpose of helping the Apostles, for the purpose of relieving them from the care of the poor, that they might devote themselves exclusively to the ministry of the word. If helps signify helpers, governments must signify governors, the abstract being in both cases put for the concrete. The question then is, Who were the governors to whom the Apostle referred? They were not the apostles, nor the prophets, nor the teachers, because they are mentioned as distinct classes. They were not helpers, because they are distinguished from them also; and besides, if deacons were intended, they could with no propriety be called governors, for deacons have no rule over the church. There is no other class of persons to whom this title, used as it is in contra-distinction to other office-bearers, will apply, but the ruling elder of Presbyterians; and it is with obvious propriety that they are designated governors, as the sole business of their office is to govern the congregation over which they are appointed. God has set some governors in the church. He has not lodged the power, as Independents suppose, in the people at large, but has ordained that a few should be invested with authority to take order that the members should walk in the ordinances and commandments of the Lord.

The last passage which I shall quote, is in the fifth chapter of the First Epistle to Timothy: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine."* Many attempts have been made to evade the evidence of this passage in favour of the point which we are endeavouring to establish. It has been explained in various ways; and learned men have employed their ingenuity to prove one thing at least, that it ought not to be understood of ruling elders; but who are meant by the elders who rule well, as distinguished from those who labour in word and doctrine, they are not agreed. Their different opinions can be viewed in no other light than as conjectures. Some say that the elders who rule well are diocesan bishops, and that those who labour in word and doctrine are preaching presbyters; but besides that, contrary to their own system, they thus assign greater honour to presbyters than to bishops, we have seen that there were no such bishops in the apostolic church; and this hypothesis must be abandoned. Others tell us that the former are ordinary bishops and presbyters, and the latter evangelists; as if it had been the business of bishops and presbyters in the primitive church to rule, and of evangelists to preach, without having any concern in the government of the church. Again, it has been supposed that the rulers here mentioned are deacons; and the labourers in word and doctrine, the ministers of the word; but we have seen that deacons have nothing to do with the government of the church. Some have fancied two kinds of elders, of whom some preached the word, and administered the sacraments; while others were employed in reading the Scriptures to the people, and performing other inferior offices. But this is a gratuitous assumption, unworthy of further attention. The most extravagant idea of all, is that of the learned Mr. Mede, who contends that the elders who rule well are civil magistrates, and those who labour in word and doctrine are ministers of the Gospel.†

These evasions being quite unsatisfactory, some have recourse to criticism, in order to wrest the passage out of our hands. First, They affirm that the adverb μάλιστα, translated *especially*, is not here distinctive, but descriptive; that is, it does not point out a different class, but describes with greater particularity the class mentioned in the beginning of the verse, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, particularly because they labour in word and doctrine." But the word, both in sacred and profane writers as it would be easy to show, uniformly serves to distinguish, and may be rendered, *most of all, chiefly, especially*. There is no reason why it should be translated differently in this verse, but one, which every honest critic will reject,—the interest of a party. Secondly, It has been said that the Apostle does not distinguish two classes, but refers, in the end of the verse, to those of the same class, who distinguish themselves by their diligence; and this is signified by the use of the word κοπιῶντες, which they affirm implies *labouring with our utmost strength*. It happens unfortunately for this criticism, that the word is employed in the New Testament to express simply the duty of the servants of Christ, and not the degree of it; and, on one occasion, when Paul intended to express greater activity, he did not consider the verb κοπιάω as sufficient to convey this idea, but joined another with it, representing Tryphena and Tryphosa as κοπιώσας, *labouring*, but saying of Perses, that she "laboured *much* in the Lord,"‡

* 1 Cor. xii. 28.

* 1 Tim. v. 17.

† Mede's Works, Disc. xix. p. 71.

‡ Rom. xvi. 12.

ὅτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν ἐν κυρίῳ. As no word is added to the verse under consideration to κοπιῶντες, it is plain that the Apostle is not speaking of uncommon diligence; and besides, it is somewhat strange to suppose that he would command the members of the church to give equal honour to all the ministers of the Gospel, although some of them were more, and others less diligent in performing their duty. Degrees of diligence certainly call for degrees of honour.

I have endeavoured to clear this passage from the attempts which have been made to pervert its meaning, and from the exceptions against our application of it. The result is, that it ought to be understood in its plain and natural meaning; and that thus viewed, it points out two classes of office-bearers who have distinct functions. It belongs to one class to rule, and in ruling their whole duty consists. They are required to do nothing more than to administer the laws of Christ for the regulation of the conduct of his followers. Those of the other class are joined with them in the rule of the church; but there is an additional duty incumbent upon them, in which the former have no concern, namely, to labour in word and doctrine, to preach the gospel, and administer the sacraments. The argument may be stated in the following manner: —There are elders, who, although they rule well, are not worthy of double honour, unless they labour in word and doctrine. But there are elders who are counted worthy of double honour, because they rule well, although they do not labour in the word and doctrine. Therefore, there are elders who are not teaching or preaching elders, that is, they are ruling elders only. The premises are clearly laid down in the passage, and the conclusion is therefore legitimate.

If there were any office in the church manifestly useless, we might confidently affirm that it is not of Divine institution. We could not, with equal confidence, pronounce an office, which appeared to us to be useful, to be divinely instituted, because we may err in our notions of utility. But the advantages resulting from the office of ruling elders are a subsidiary argument in its favour. As there can usually be only one preaching elder in a congregation, he could not perform his peculiar duties, and at the same time undertake the superintendence of the conduct of the members. Elders are his assistants in this work. Living among the people, and associating familiarly with them, they have opportunities of knowing their conduct, and can personally interpose with their counsels and admonitions; and under the joint care of the pastor and the rulers, the people grow in faith and holiness, and walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord.

LECTURE CI.

ON THE CHURCH.

Church Power.—Nature of It.—Independence of the Church. —Its relation to the State.—Church Power distinguished into *POTESTAS* δογματικὴ, *POTESTAS* διατακτικὴ, and *POTESTAS* διακριτικὴ.*—The Extent and Limits of these Several Kinds.

We have seen that Jesus has established a particular form of government in the church, and has appointed certain persons to administer it. They have been distinguished into two classes; the first comprehending the extraordinary office-bearers, who ceased when the purpose of their institution was accomplished; and the second comprehending pastors and elders, who are to continue to the end of the world. I proceed to inquire with what power they are invested, and to finish what I have to say on the subject of the church.

Some have maintained that the church possesses no power, and that the office of her rulers consists solely in instructing and persuading the people. They merely propose to them truths to be believed, and duties to be practised, which they may enforce by motives calculated to impress their consciences and hearts; but they have no authority to call them to account for their conduct, and to deprive such as they deem unworthy, of their privileges. If any power of this kind is exercised in a particular church, it is conferred, according to them, by the civil magistrate, who may appoint censures to be inflicted in particular cases for the maintenance of good order, and the advancement of the interests of morality. The author of this opinion was Erastus, a physician of the sixteenth century; from whom the doctrine, which makes the church subject to the state, and places the civil magistrate at its head, has received the name of Erastianism. It found friends and advocates; and, to a certain extent, is acted upon in the Church of England, which acknowledges the supremacy of the king in causes ecclesiastical as well as civil. It was brought forward by Erastus, and defended by his followers, as the only effectual method of putting an end to the extravagant and tyrannical power which had been claimed by the Church of Rome. This was a clumsy expedient for remedying the evil, requiring no wisdom or ingenuity; and upon the same principle, many a good thing should be destroyed because it has been abused. But, in such cases, enlightened zeal will content itself with reform; and leaving the power in existence, will employ itself in so defining it, and placing such checks upon it, as shall henceforth prevent the excesses which are the subject of complaint.

It is unnecessary to engage in the refutation of an opinion, which no person will adopt who entertains just notions of the nature and design of the church, and does not consider it merely as an appendage of the state, and a political engine. As we have already shown that a form of ecclesiastical government is appointed in the Scriptures, and that certain offices have been instituted for the management of the affairs of the church, we have virtually proved that power is committed to it; and nothing is now necessary but to ascertain what it is, and how far it extends.

Let it be observed, that it is a spiritual power, totally distinct from the civil power which is exercised in the government of cities and nations. The rule according to which it is exercised is the word of God, and not the laws of the state. The law of Jesus Christ supersedes every other law; and when these happen to interfere, the members are bound to obey God rather than men. Its object is the conscience; and its end is not gained, as in human governments, by the external obedience of the subjects, unless it proceed from a sense of the Divine authority. The means which it employs to secure obedience are, commands, entreaties, promises, threatenings, and censures; which, however, are all calculated to affect the mind only, and not the outward state. The church does not resort to confiscation of goods, imprisonment, banishment, stripes, and death, to enforce its decrees; it leaves men in full possession of their temporal privileges. The matters about which civil government is concerned, are property, liberty, personal security; the power of the church relates to instruction in heavenly mysteries, excitement to the cultivation of holiness, and preparation for the world to come. The end of civil government is to promote the peace and happiness of the present life; the end of ecclesiastical government is the edification of the body of Christ, the building up of the Saints in faith and holiness to life everlasting. Civil governments can compel their subjects to obey the laws, but the church uses no compulsion, and employs only moral means to work upon the heart.

* Doctrinal, legislative, and judicial POWER.

Hence you perceive that the church is a society totally distinct from and independent of the state. Its constitution, its laws, its administration, and its objects, are different; and, although its members and the subjects of the state are the same individuals, yet they are considered as sustaining different characters, in relation to the state, as rational beings who have certain duties to perform to society; in relation to the church, as the worshipers and servants of God. The alliance of church and state, of which so much has been said, and which has been represented as necessary to the welfare of both, is always injurious to the former, when the state encroaches upon the prerogatives of the church, or the church barters any portion of her power to secure the patronage of the state. The separate provinces of both are clearly defined; and each may exercise its peculiar functions without interfering with the other. The state can accomplish all the ends of civil government, without any other aid from the church than the influence of the doctrine which it teaches, upon the tempers and manners of the people; and the church is so far from needing the assistance of the state, that its interference would defeat the design of its institution, which is to prevail upon men by persuasion, and not by force; to inspire them with a sincere attachment to religion, not to extort a hypocritical profession of it.

When we affirm that the power of the church is not derived from the state, or dependent upon it, we do not plead for the exemption either of the members, or of the rulers, from civil authority. The Church of Rome, indeed, contended for this privilege in behalf of the clergy, and succeeded in establishing it. They were not amenable to the magistrate, even when they had committed crimes, and were accountable only to the ecclesiastical tribunals. Protestants advance no such claim; and acknowledge that church-men, as well as lay-men, are subject to the civil jurisdiction. The objection, therefore, which has been raised against the intrinsic power of the church,—that it establishes *imperium in imperio*,*—is not applicable to our principles; although it bears with all its force against those of papists, by which the clergy, in all the nations of Europe, were incorporated into a body, independent of the states which protected them, and owing obedience solely to bishops and archbishops, and the pope at their head. Thus two rival powers were erected, with opposite interests; and we learn from history what fatal conflicts sometimes ensued, involving nations in destructive wars, and terminating in the degradation and dethronement of monarchs. The church, indeed, even upon our principles, may be called *imperium in imperio*; because it is a society subsisting in the bosom of a state, distinct from it with respect to its internal jurisdiction, and governed by its own laws; but it threatens no danger to the state, and gives it no disturbance in carrying on its proper functions, because it does not intermeddle with civil and political affairs, and confines itself to claims and operations purely spiritual.

The power of the church is commonly divided according to the nature of the objects about which it is employed, into three parts. The first is called *potestas δογματικη*, or its power respecting articles of faith; and under this head some comprehend the preaching of the word, the administration of the sacraments, the ordination of ministers, &c. The second is *potestas διατακτικη* or the power of the church to make laws and constitutions. The third is *potestas διακριτικη*, or the power of the church to censure and excommunicate offenders, and to restore the penitent to communion.

The first in order is the *potestas δογματικη*, or the power of the church in reference to dogmas or articles of faith. That the church has power to make such articles, Protestants deny, upon this ground, that the Scriptures contain all the truths which it is necessary to know and believe; and they justly condemn the Church of Rome, which, admitting another rule of faith called tradition, has introduced into her creed human dogmas and grossly erroneous tenets, and anathematised all who do not implicitly receive them. In order to determine how far this part of the power of the church extends, I shall lay before you the following observations.

First, The church is the depository of the Scriptures. Under the former dispensation, the sacred oracles were committed to the Jews; but the honour of being their guardians is now transferred to the disciples of Christ. The church having received them as containing the whole revelation of the will of God, she is bound to keep them as a precious treasure, and to transmit them from age to age, in order to enlighten, and sanctify, and comfort the souls of men, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."* But although the Scriptures are deposited in the hands of the church, we must beware of thinking that their authority depends in any degree upon her judgment, or that her sanction was necessary to give them validity. This doctrine is maintained in the church of Rome. The Scriptures, it has been said, have no authority without the authority of the church; and without the church, Matthew is entitled to no more credit than Livy. But, besides the impiety of such sentiments, papists involve themselves in palpable absurdity. If you ask them how we shall know the church, whose authority is so great, they must answer that we know it from the Scriptures, and thus they reason in a circle, proving first the authority of the church from the Scriptures, and then the authority of the Scriptures from the church. We acknowledge that it is by testimony that we ascertain the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures. By the testimony of those who lived at the time when they were published, and were deeply interested in the matter, we are assured that they are the writings of the persons to whom they are ascribed. Thus far their testimony goes, but no farther. We do not receive the Scriptures simply because they received them; but because we are sure, from their circumstances, that they would not have received them, unless they had been fully satisfied of the Divine commission of those who gave them to the world. If the church has any thing to do in this business, its office is merely to point out the books in which revelation is contained. Our belief of their divinity is founded on the internal and external evidences of their heavenly origin. We do not ascribe a power to the church to admit books into the canon, or to exclude them from it, at her pleasure. In admitting and excluding, she was bound to proceed upon evidence; and we acquiesce in her decision, not because it is hers, but because the evidence upon which it was founded appears satisfactory to ourselves. But this is very different from the Romish doctrine, which resolves all the evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and all their authority, into the decrees of the church.

Secondly, It belongs to the church to explain the Scriptures, and to call upon men to study, and believe, and obey them. The ministers of the church are the expounders of the law; and to them may be applied the words of the prophet, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts."† But the expositions of the church are authoritative only

* A government within a government—an independent jurisdiction in the bosom of the state.

* Eph. iv. 13.

† Mal. ii. 7.

in a limited sense. Her ministers are not self-created teachers, but have received their commission from Jesus Christ, and in executing it are bound to take his word as their rule; but as they may misapprehend its meaning, or intentionally deviate from it, and obtrude their own notions as the dictates of revelation, it is a duty which Christians owe to themselves and to their Divine Master, to exalt no human being to the chair of infallibility, to take nothing upon trust, and to bring the doctrine of their teachers "to the law and to the testimony, because, if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them."* The church, we have said, has no power to make new articles of faith, and ought therefore to adhere strictly to the Scriptures in all her instructions. By the Romanists another standard has been introduced, to which they assign an equal degree of authority with the Scriptures, or rather a greater, as they do not hesitate to affirm that without its aid the Scriptures cannot be understood. This is tradition; by which they mean a summary of doctrine which was in the church before the Scriptures were published, and is the only sure interpreter of them, has come down by oral communication or in the writings of the Fathers, and would suffice for the direction of Christians in all things necessary to be believed and practised, although the Scriptures were annihilated. It is unnecessary to say how derogatory all this is to the honour of the Scriptures, and how contrary to their own testimony concerning themselves, that they are "a light to our feet and a lamp to our path;† and that they "are able to make us wise unto salvation," and to "furnish us for every good work."‡ This witness is not true, if tradition is necessary. What the church of Rome says concerning tradition is a mere assumption without the shadow of proof, and rests upon the same ground with the oral law of the Jews. It is equally uncertain, no man being able to tell what it is; it changes with the fancies of men, that which is a truth of tradition in one age, being pronounced to be an error in another; it is anything which they choose to make it, to serve their own purposes. It is the inexhausible storehouse from which papists have drawn the enormous mass of error, superstition, and idolatry, which has made the word of God of no effect, and almost overwhelmed the Christian religion.

Lastly, The church has power to draw up and enact summaries of Christian doctrine, in order to exhibit to the world her views of the Scriptures, to oppose prevailing heresies and errors, to furnish the people with a concise statement of the great principles of religion, and to provide an effectual means of ascertaining the sentiments of candidates for admission, especially into the ministry, and thus to secure harmony and uniformity in the public ministrations. These are called symbols, confessions, articles, formularies, and they were introduced at an early period. We have the Nicene creed, the Constantinopolitan creed, and others composed by synods and councils. There is also the celebrated Athanasian creed, which is called by the name of Athanasius, because it contains a summary of his doctrine. The real author is unknown, but its orthodoxy has procured its reception by several churches. Besides these, there is the Apostles' creed, which also owes its name to the conformity of its doctrines to that of the Apostles. It is certain that it was not drawn up by them; and a story which has been told, that at its original formation all the Apostles were present and each contributed a part, is absurd and ridiculous. Modern churches have imitated the example of those in former times, and have given to the public their confessions of faith, from which we learn how far they agree with the Scriptures, and in what respects they differ from each other.

If you ask what authority these summaries possess, I answer, that they have none in themselves, any more than other human compositions. The only difference between them and the creeds of individuals is this, that there is a greater probability that they are right; as it is less likely that so many who were engaged in drawing them up should have erred, than a single person, who gives the result of his insulated studies. At the same time, I must say that this probability does not amount to much, because we sometimes find that there is an Athanasius *contra totum mundum*,* or that one man discovers the truth, and a council misses it; and, at any rate, it is not a ground on which any Christian could safely and rationally proceed in choosing his creed. The authority of such summaries is derived solely from the Scriptures; if they are agreeable to them, they are binding, because they exhibit the truth, if not agreeable to them, they ought to be rejected, with as little ceremony as we should use towards a private attempt to impose upon conscience. There has been much misapprehension upon this subject, which has been too much encouraged by the vague, injudicious language of the public teachers of religion; and the standards of a church have been regarded as sacred things, which it would be profaneness to touch. So far as these sentiments prevail among Protestants, they adopt one of the most absurd and dangerous errors of Popery. When the church speaks, we have a right to try what she says by the supreme standard; and her dictates have no control over our consciences, unless she can satisfactorily show that they are conformable to it.

The sum, then, of what has been said concerning the *potestas dogmatica* of the church is, that she is the depository of the Scriptures; that she is appointed to interpret them, and performs this duty by public and private instruction, oral and written, but has no power to make articles of faith; and that, as she is not infallible, every man retains the right of private judgment, or the right to examine the Scriptures for himself, and to follow them, either by joining in the profession of the church, or by dissenting from it. This view of the power of the church accords with the sentiments stated in our Confession of Faith: "It belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience;" and their "decrees and determinations, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission." "All synods and councils since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as an help in both."† The church of England expresses the same sentiments in the article concerning general councils: "When they be gathered together, (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and word of God,) they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them, as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture."‡

Let us now proceed to consider the second part of the power of the church, which is called *potestas διαταχτικη*, or *potestas ordinans*; that is, the power to enact canons, or rules for government and order.

In the first place, The church has not power to establish any form of government which shall appear most eligible to her rulers, judging in this matter as if they were at liberty to pursue their own views of propriety and expedience. Were the form of government ambulatory, as some suppose, it would undoubtedly belong to them to accommodate it to circumstances, so far as this might be done without injury to the

* Is. viii. 20. † Ps. cxix. 105. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 15, 17.

* Against the whole world. † Chap. xxxi. § 3, 4.
‡ Art. xxi.

interests of religion. But we have proved that a particular form is prescribed, from which they cannot deviate, without usurping an authority which cannot be derived from Jesus Christ, as it is employed in setting aside his institutions. The command to Moses is addressed also to them; "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shown unto thee in the mount."* It may be objected, that the form of government for the Christian church is not delineated with as much particularity as the tabernacle was, with its various services. But the general principles are laid down; the outlines are given; and the church has nothing to do but to develope the principles, and to fill up the outlines, in exact conformity to the spirit of the original sketch.

In the second place, The church has not power to make laws to regulate the moral conduct of the members; she has no legislative authority; and her office consists solely in publishing and enjoining the laws which the Head of the church has already enacted. Moral laws can emanate only from the Sovereign of heaven and earth. Ecclesiastical rulers are in the same situation with the subordinate magistrates in a kingdom. There are laws which bind them as well as the subjects; and the only purpose for which they are appointed, is to superintend the execution of them. The decalogue which was published from Sinai, is the standard of duty to Christians as well as to Jews; and of its perfection no doubt can be entertained, whether we reflect upon its Author, or upon the two grand principles upon which it is founded, and into which all its precepts are resolved,—supreme love to God, and sincere love to our neighbour. The details of duty in the Scripture, whether in the didactic, the exhortatory, or the admonitory form, serve to explain it; and the text, with the commentary, constitutes a rule so full and so particular, that it stands in need of no addition, and is sufficient to direct the Christian in the whole course of his life. The Church of Rome is guilty of great presumption and impiety in assuming the right of legislation. Not content to enforce the commandments of Christ, she has enlarged his law by new precepts, originating in her own authority, or, what is the same thing, in tradition,—the name which she uses to justify her corruptions and usurpations; she has instituted holidays which God has not appointed; prescribed modes and objects of worship which are condemned in his word; prohibited certain kinds of food at some times to all, and at all times to some; forbidden the marriage of the clergy; enjoined confession to a priest, fasts, penances, and pilgrimages; and has introduced these innovations, not as matters of order and expedience; but as laws binding upon conscience, and requiring obedience under pain of censure and mortal sin. Thus the prediction has been fulfilled, that "the man of sin should, as God, sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."† And every church which dares to make laws which shall directly affect conscience, blasphemously arrogates the prerogative of the Most High. "God alone," says our Confession, "is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience."‡

In the third place, The church has not power to decree rites and ceremonies. Here we encounter the Church of Rome, and the Church of England; which last affirms in her articles that the church has such power;‖ and to both, the claim is necessary to justify their practice. We demand Scriptural proof, but can find none. It is in vain to quote the words of Paul to the Corinthians, "Let all things be done decently and in order;"* because they do not refer to rites and ceremonies, but to certain abuses in the public exercise of extraordinary gifts. They have not the most remote relation to a supposed power to render the ordinances and ministrations of religion more becoming and impressive by human additions to them. There is a vague kind of talk among persons who seem to know little of the nature of genuine religion, about the necessity of adapting it to the nature of man, who is so much influenced by his senses as to be incapable of pure spiritual contemplations, and needs their aid to fix his attention, and excite devout sentiments and affections. But while we deny that there is any such necessity, and can prove the falsity of the assumption by experience, we say that, if it had existed, we may presume that the Author of religion, who knows our frame, would have provided for it by appointing suitable rites, and not have left the invention of them to men themselves, who discovered such a propensity in all ages to corrupt religion, and to turn it into a vain show. It is supposed that the ordinances of the gospel are defective from their simplicity, and that unless they be new-modelled, they will not produce the intended effect, at least upon the generality of mankind. Is not this plainly to impeach the wisdom of Christ, as if he had not rightly apprehended the proper means of making religious impressions upon the human mind, or had delivered his institutions to the church in an unfinished state, and committed the supply of what was wanting to persons who have proved themselves incompetent, by the nature of the ceremonies which they have devised, and by the multiplication of them to such a degree as to convert religion into a bodily service? The advocates for ceremonies forget the words of our Lord, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;"† and would turn religion into a mechanical process, the effect of impressions on the senses and the imagination. They forget that it is spiritual; that it is produced by the contemplation of spiritual objects; that the medium by which these affect the mind is faith, which "is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for;"‡ and that the excitement of the natural passions has nothing of the nature of piety, in the estimation of Him who dwells with the humble and the contrite that tremble at his word.

The church assumes a power which does not belong to her, when she makes any addition to the institutions of Christ; and still more when she exacts the observance of these on pain of censure and excommunication. In this case, she claims an authority co-ordinate with that of our exalted Redeemer. Were the church simply to recommend certain ceremonies, leaving it free to every man to observe them or not, according to the dictates of his conscience, her conduct, although it could not be justified, would be less reprehensible. But when she issues her mandate, that all should conform, she assumes the tone of an usurper and a tyrant; and it is a duty which every man owes to the Head of the church, to resist her impositions. Besides other instances of will-worship in the Church of England, she has appended two human rites to the sacraments,—the sign of the cross in baptism, and kneeling at the Lord's Supper. For the first, there is not a shadow of authority in the practice of the Apostles; and the reason which she gives for it is imaginary; that "it is a token that the baptized person shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banners against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end." Men are the authors both of the sign and of the interpretation of it. Faith,

* Heb. viii. 5. † 2 Thess. ii. 4. ‡ Chap. xx. 2. ‖ Art. xx.

* 1 Cor. xiv. 40. † John iv. 24. ‡ Heb. xi. 1.

nich rests solely upon revelation, sees nothing in it but an idle motion of the hand. Kneeling at the Lord's table is enjoined as expressive of reverence; but by what authority is this posture required? Not surely by that of Jesus Christ, who administered the ordinance to his disciples placed at table in the same manner as when they received their ordinary meals. How then comes it to pass that the symbols of his body and blood must be received with a sign of external reverence, which was not given when he himself was corporeally present? This is rather a puzzling question even to Papists, who believe transubstantiation; and still more so to Protestants, who do not believe it: but the truth is, that the right is derived from Papists, who maintain that the elements are changed into the body, blood, and divinity of Christ; and is therefore, among Protestants, a childish and absurd imitation of a practice founded on a doctrine which they hold in abhorrence. There is not much encouragement to recognize in the church this power of ordaining ceremonies, when we see that one of its fruits is symbolizing with idolaters. The ordinances were given by Jesus Christ in a perfect state, and are as sufficient to promote all the ends of their institution now, as they were in the primitive times, when they subsisted in their original simplicity.

Lastly, There are several matters respecting external order, to which the power of the church does extend. These do not relate to the essence or form of the ordinances of religion, or to the moral conduct of the members; but to circumstances which are connected with the regular proceedings of any society, and which human prudence is competent to settle. Thus, it belongs to the church to appoint the times of public worship; not to make holidays, but to determine at what hours Christians shall assemble on the Sabbath, and on what other occasions they shall come together to join in the solemn exercises of religion, according to the calls of Providence. It is also her province, to point out the order in which the public ministrations should be conducted, that uniformity may be established within her pale; to fix the bounds of congregations, presbyteries, and synods, that there may be no interference of interests and claims, and that each may confine itself to its own jurisdiction; to make regulations respecting their intercourse, and the transference of members from one place to another; to lay down rules for conducting judicial processes, that nothing may be done rashly or unfairly, but the ends of justice may be attained; to prescribe the education of candidates for the ministry, and the steps which are to be taken with a view to ascertain their qualifications, and to introduce them into office. With regard to such matters, it is evident that they imply no legislative authority, but merely the power of arrangement; that uniformity is not necessary throughout the whole Christian church, but only in particular divisions of it; and that the order may be varied, without impeding the general purpose of edification, according to the judgment of the church, founded upon the customs and circumstances of different nations and times.

Let us proceed to consider the last part of ecclesiastical power, which is called *potestas διακριτικη*, or *potestas judicialis vel disciplinaris*, and consists in the exercise of discipline. Erastus and his followers, who denied the power of the church *in toto*, necessarily controverted the power of discipline, and maintained, that she had no right to exclude any from her communion; and that, in doing so, she encroached upon the prerogative of the civil magistrate, to whom alone it belongs to punish the guilty.

The abettors of this opinion place the church in more disadvantageous circumstances than any other society. A state has power to protect itself from disorder and dishonour, by the restraint and expulsion of the lawless and unruly. Every other association lays down rules to be observed by the members, the infraction of which subjects them to censure, and it may be, to the loss of their privileges. It would be strange to suppose that the church alone is exposed, without defence, to have her peace disturbed, her laws violated, her reputation injured, by conduct inconsistent with her holy profession. To say that the civil magistrate ought to interpose to remedy such disorders, is to annihilate the church, or to make it exist only in name. In this case, the church and the state are the same; the privileges of the church belong to men as members of the state; and the state punishes them, not as unworthy disciples of Christ, but as disobedient subjects.

To every one who has read and understood the Scriptures, it will appear that the church is a society specifically different from the state, and instituted solely for spiritual purposes. A person has a right of admission into it, not because he was born in the country where it is established, nor simply because he was baptized in his infancy, but because he makes a credible profession of faith. On this ground only can he claim the enjoyment of its privileges, which from their nature appear not to be intended for all promiscuously, but for those who in the judgment of charity are disciples of Christ. It is evident, that it is only on the same ground that he can retain them; and that, if he has forfeited his title by conduct which impeaches the sincerity of his profession, they may be justly suspended or withdrawn. If this be granted to be true,—and it is not conceivable that it can be disputed by any man of common sense,—the inference is obvious, that there must be a power lodged in the church to enforce the observance of her laws by censures and excommunication.

When our Lord gave Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," we do not conceive that he conferred upon him a peculiar privilege, unless the words refer simply to the fact, that he was the person who opened the new dispensation to the Jews, by preaching to them on the day of Pentecost, and to the Gentiles by preaching to Cornelius. Whatever power is implied in these words, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,"* was common to him and the other Apostles, to whom the same words were addressed on another occasion.† Binding and loosing are expressive of authority, not only to declare doctrinally what are the obligations of Christians, and in what respects they are free, but to inflict and remove censures. The offender is bound when the church pronounces sentence upon him, and is loosed when he is restored to privileges upon repentance; and the proceedings are ratified in heaven, when they are conducted in conformity to Scripture.

It appears that discipline was exercised in the primitive church. The case of the incestuous man is an example. He had committed a sin aggravated in itself, and highly discreditable to the Christian profession; and Paul commanded the Corinthians, "when they were gathered together, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver him unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord."‡ He told them at the same time, that although they could not avoid all intercourse with the wicked men of the world; yet, "if any man that was called a brother was a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner," they were not to keep company, nor even to eat with him;‖ and as we might have expected, he plainly signified that they were not to sit down with him at the table of the Lord. He directs a heretic to be rejected after the first and second admonition;§ and

* Matth. xvi. 19. † Ib. xviii. 18. ‡ 1 Cor. v. 4, 5.
‖ 1 Cor. v. 11. § Titus iii. 10.

he calls upon Christians to withdraw from every brother that walked disorderly, and not after the tradition which they had received.* Some of the Asiatic churches are reproved, because they had neglected the exercise of discipline. The charge brought against them is, that "they had them that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans," and "that held the doctrine of Balaam;" "that they suffered that woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess;"† and the obvious meaning is, that, instead of employing the authority which they had received from Jesus Christ against such persons, they permitted them to remain in the church.

The rulers of the church have authority over the members. As it is their province to judge who should be admitted, and to inspect their conduct when they have been received into fellowship, so they have power to censure and to expel such as prove themselves to be unworthy. This is the natural right of every society, and it is given to the church by the special appointment of her Sovereign: "Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." "Exhort and rebuke with all authority; let no man despise thee."‡

The objects of the censures of the church are offences or scandals; by which are meant, parts of conduct which are contrary to the law of Christ, and are calculated to lead others into sin by the force of example, as well as to expose religion to reproach. They are public offences known to the church, or to some part of the members; for, with respect to those of a private nature, they ought not to be brought to light, unless the guilty person persist in them after private admonition; and to tell them in the first instance to the church, is to create a scandal, under the pretext of removing it.

Offences are to be treated differently, according to the difference of their degrees. When they are of a lighter kind, and discover rather inadvertence than bad intention, a simple admonition will suffice: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."‖ A greater degree of guilt will call for a more severe expression of disapprobation, or a rebuke solemnly administered in the name of Jesus Christ, of which it is the design to affect more deeply the conscience of the offender, and to excite him to prayer for pardon and sanctifying grace. There are cases which require that the church should proceed still farther. Individuals sometimes commit flagrant and aggravated sins, which, although they do not necessarily infer the total want of religious principle, bring the sincerity of their profession into doubt. Such offenders are suspended from sealing ordinances, as they are called, till they have given evidence of repentance, and then they are restored to their privileges. This sentence is called the lesser excommunication, and the removal of it is termed absolution. They are not absolved from their sin,—for it is the prerogative of God alone to forgive it,—but from the sentence of excommunication. The highest censure which the church has power to inflict, is called the greater excommunication, and consists in expelling the person from the communion of the faithful. The grounds of it are contumacy or the obstinate refusal to submit to admonition and rebuke, and perseverance in sin in defiance of all endeavours to reclaim him. We have an example in the case of the incestuous man, who was delivered "unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord."§ Commentators generally suppose that these words imply something miraculous, and that the man was smitten with some bodily disease, through the agency of Satan, in consequence of which his health and strength declined. His spirit would be saved in the day of the Lord, if, through the Divine blessing, his experience of the painful effects of sin in this life, proved the means of leading him to repentance. But even in the present times, this highest censure may be still considered as the delivering of the excommunicated person to Satan. The world is the kingdom of Satan, and the church is the kingdom of Christ. Excommunication is the returning of a professed subject of Christ, who has proved himself to be a traitor and a rebel, to the kingdom to which he originally belonged. It declares that Christ is not his Lord, for he has refused to obey him, and that he is under the dominion of the prince of this world. He is sent back to him as an alien, who has no right to remain in the kingdom of Christ; because he has violated its laws, and is determined not to submit to them. Hence it appears that this sentence is very awful; since, when pronounced upon just grounds, it involves the eternal perdition of the person, if he continue impenitent.

But the effects of the censures of the church extend only to the soul. It is a gross perversion of their design, to accompany them with civil pains, confiscation of goods, imprisonment, exile, or death; to deliver up the excommunicated person to the secular arm, as the Church of Rome does, with a hypocritical prayer that he may be mercifully treated, while it is her secret intention that he should expire at a stake. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual." Power is given to the church, not for destruction, but for edification; and its object is the good even of those who fall under the severest censures. Like him whom she acknowledges as her Head, she has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked should turn from their ways and live; and her arms are opened to receive the penitent, and to restore them to a place among her children.

* 2 Thess. iii. 6. † Rev. ii. 14, 15. 20.
‡ 2 Tim. iv. 2. Tit. ii. 15. ‖ Gal. vi. 1. § 1 Cor. v. 5.

LECTURE CII.

ON THE LAW OF GOD.

Connexion of the Practical and Doctrinal Parts of Theology.—The Moral Law.—Remarks on the Ground of Moral Obligation; and the Source of Morality.—The Decalogue.—Rules for Interpreting It.

The system of Theology consists of two parts, the doctrinal and the practical. The former is the foundation of the latter. The natural order of things, therefore, requires that we should first consider the doctrines and then proceed to explain the duties which spring out of them. It is because God is our Creator, that he has a right to give law to us; and the relation in which he stands to us as creatures and as sinners, the dispensations of which we are the objects, and the privileges and blessings which he has bestowed upon us, supply the motives by which we should be excited to obey. In a course of ministerial instructions, these two parts are usually blended together. It may, sometimes, indeed, be deemed expedient to go over the system in regular order, and, in this case, a separate illustration will be given of doctrines and precepts; but even then they ought not to be kept entirely distinct. No doctrine of religion should be expounded, without some statement of the duties to which it leads, and the motives which it furnishes; for all our discourses should be of a practical tendency. On the other hand, no duty should be inculcated, without a reference more or less explicit, to the doctrine or doctrines with which it is connected, and by the belief of which the heart is purified, and its powers are engaged in the service of God. The gospel is represented to be the doctrine

according to godliness, or, the doctrine which inspires piety towards God, and respect for his authority.

In the Scriptures, doctrines and precepts are often mixed; but sometimes they are exhibited separately. In the Old Testament, besides the precepts of the law of Moses which are delivered at great length in the Pentateuch, we have the Book of Proverbs, which is almost wholly composed of moral maxims and rules of life. In the New Testament, we have our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, besides parables and discourses of the same nature in the Gospels; and of the Epistles, those of which the first part is devoted to doctrinal discussions, commonly conclude with a detail of duties which believers are bound to maintain. Some of the Epistles are the models upon which our systems are formed; and the similarity of arrangement is particularly observable in the Epistle to the Romans.

The law of God, which is binding upon Christians, is contained in the Decalogue, or the Ten Words, as the Jews call it, because it consists of ten precepts, which were originally written on two tables of stone; the first, comprehending the four precepts which enjoin our duty to God; and the second, the six which prescribe our duty to men. It is called the Moral Law, because the subject of its injunctions is not ceremonial observances, but moral actions; and to distinguish it from the positive laws, which were only of temporary obligation. Of this description was the ceremonial law, which prescribed the ritual of worship under the former economy, and the judicial law, which regulated the civil and political affairs of the Jews. The ceremonial law was abrogated when its typical institutions were fulfilled in Jesus Christ; and the judicial law was repealed when the Jews ceased to exist in a national capacity. The moral law, however, has no relation to times and places, or to one nation more than another; but being founded in the relations of men to their Creator, and to one another, it retains its authority under all dispensations.

It is commonly said that this law was originally written upon the heart of man; but the language is figurative, and, unless it be explained, conveys no idea to the mind. We understand by it, then, not only that man was endowed with intellectual and moral powers, or was created with a capacity to perceive his duty and feel its obligation, but that the knowledge of it was immediately communicated to him by his Maker. He was not left to find it out by reflection and reasoning, but was at once made acquainted with his relations, and the moral obligations resulting from them. In consequence of sin, this light became dim, so that the full extent of the region which it once illuminated was no longer perceived, and the objects which still fell within the sphere of vision, were not seen in their exact shape and dimensions. Accordingly, the moral code of heathen nations is imperfect, leaving out some duties, and exhibiting others in a mutilated form; but the notion of a moral law has been widely diffused, and some traces of it may be discovered among all nations. The Gentiles who have not the written law, do by nature the things enjoined by it, and show that the work of the law is written upon their hearts, by the operations of conscience, which sometimes accuses, and at other times excuses them.* The morality of heathens may be accounted for in two ways. It may be conceived to have been handed down to them by tradition, to be the voice of the law, which was given to our first parents, and revived by subsequent revelations, still speaking to men by the lips of their progenitors and teachers, who have inculcated from age to age the precepts which had been delivered to themselves by a preceding race. It may be supposed, again, to be the result of reasoning; a discovery made by the mental faculties employed in contemplating the principles, feelings, and instincts of human nature, and the circumstances in which it is placed, and in deducing inferences from them. This, however, is the work only of a few superior minds, and will not account for the existence of moral sentiments among all classes of men. I am disposed to think that heathen nations are chiefly indebted for their knowledge to tradition, although it cannot be questioned that the human mind is so constituted as to perceive the propriety or impropriety of certain actions, and to make them the objects of approbation or disapprobation.

How insufficient reason is to discover a system of morality, we could not determine with precision, unless we had an opportunity to observe its success in a nation which was left solely to the light of nature. But where shall we meet with such a nation, since all mankind are derived from the same stock, and the original family was illuminated by revelation? Few of its rays may now shine in some regions of the earth; but we are not certain that they are any-where completely extinguished; that is, we cannot ascertain that any nation owes all its knowledge on this subject to its own insulated discoveries. But the general insufficiency of reason is evident, not only from the errors and defects in the codes of morality which have been drawn up with the aid of tradition by the most learned and civilized heathens, but from the difficulty which professed Christians have experienced in settling the foundation of their system, when they had resolved to be guided in the inquiry by reason alone.

The first question which demands our attention, is the ground of moral obligation; and here we encounter many different opinions. If I ask why I should pursue one course of action rather than the opposite; one says, Because it is right; another, Because it is conformable to reason and nature; a third, Because it is conformable to truth; a fourth, Because it is agreeable to the fitness of things; and a fifth, Because it contributes to the general good. The fitness of things has been much insisted upon by some metaphysical writers, as the ground of moral obligation. "The necessary and eternal different relations that different things bear to one another, and the consequent fitness or unfitness of the application of different things or different relations to one another, ought constantly to determine the wills of all rational beings, to govern all their actions by the rules of justice, equity, goodness, and truth, for the good of the public, in their respective stations; that is, these eternal and necessary differences of things make it fit and reasonable so to act; they cause it to be their duty, or lay an obligation upon them so to do, even separate from the consideration of these rules being the positive will or command of God." It is pretty plain that this abstruse speculation, which some of you may find it difficult to comprehend, could never be intended to be the ground of moral obligation to mankind at large; and that we must seek for it in something more simple and level to their capacity. It is equally evident, that it properly constitutes no moral obligation at all. The fitness of things is said, indeed, to oblige us independently of the will of God; but how can this be? Is there any obligation but from a law; and any law without the will of a superior? If a man act contrary to the fitness of things, you may pronounce him to be unreasonable, but you cannot call him criminal. He may subject himself to inconvenience or suffering; but he is only foolish. The truth is, that the fitness of things as a rule of duty is a word without meaning; and is only used in an intelligible sense, when it expresses the institution of things by the will of the Creator, from which the duties of his creatures naturally flow. But when thus explained, the fitness of things and the will of God signify the same thing; the fitness, the relation, or the order of things, being the medium by which he has intimated his will.—Another ground of obligation is utility, or

* Rom. ii. 14.

the tendency of actions, to promote the general good. "Actions are to be estimated," says Dr. Paley, "by their tendency. Whatever is expedient is right. It is the utility of any moral rule alone which constitutes the obligation of it."* But hear Bishop Butler. "As we are not competent judges what is upon the whole for the good of the world, there may be other immediate ends appointed us to pursue, besides that one of doing good or producing happiness. Though the good of the creation be the only end of the Author of it, yet he may have laid us under particular obligations, which we may discern and feel ourselves under, quite distinct from a perception, that the observance or violation of them is for the happiness or misery of our fellow-creatures. And this is in fact the case. For there are certain dispositions of mind, and certain actions, which are in themselves approved or disapproved by mankind, abstracted from the consideration of their tendency to the happiness or misery of the world; approved or disapproved by reflection, by that principle which is the guide of life, the judge of right and wrong."† I may add, that to hold utility to be the foundation of morals, is to ascribe to men more comprehensive views than they actually possess; and it is well said in the above quotation, that we are not competent judges what is upon the whole for the good of the world. It is a principle too unwieldy for our grasp, and extremely apt to be abused by the substitution of particular for general good. Besides, all our knowledge of what is good is derived from experience, and is posterior to moral obligation, unless we suppose that the laws founded upon it did not become binding, till men had discovered them in the progress of time. I apprehend that, in this theory, the effects of a law are confounded with the reason of it; and this is an error; for it by no means follows, because moral laws are productive of happiness, that they had no other cause, and were intended to accomplish no other design. They may result from the nature of things, or the relations which subsist in the universe; and the good resulting from them, may not be their ultimate end, but a consequence of the benevolence which gave existence to the system of creation.

The details of morality will evidently be affected by the principle which is assumed as its foundation, or by the rule of action which is established. It is not certain that the same conclusions would be drawn by the person who founded it in the fitness of things, and by him who founded it on utility. Hence we see the insufficiency of reason to be the guide of life, and should be thankful that we enjoy a clearer and more steady light.

A question has been agitated among Theologians with respect to the rule of moral action, whether it originated in the will of God, or is founded in the nature of things; and this is in fact to inquire whether morality is mutable or immutable. Some have maintained that the whole moral law originated in the will of God; that the duties enjoined in it are right, solely because he has commanded them; and that, if he had so pleased, our duty might have been made to consist in actions different, or contrary. A similar notion was entertained by some ancient philosophers, who pronounced virtue and vice to be arbitrary distinctions; and is imputed by the Fathers to Simon Magus, as one of the erroneous tenets which he inculcated. It has been adopted by some Divines of the Roman Church, with a design to uphold the dispensing power which they ascribe to the Pope. It would be sufficient, I should think, to silence them, were we simply to ask, whether God could have exempted us from the duty of loving himself, or have made it our duty to hate him; and whether the same change might have taken place with respect to the love of our neighbour? Others run into the opposite extreme, and affirm, that the whole moral law is founded in the nature of things; and consequently that no part of it could be altered. It is exactly what it must always be, while God and man continue the same. Some of them, however, have found it necessary to qualify this opinion, and have given such an explanation of it as virtually amounts to the third opinion, which I am going to state, and which holds an intermediate place between the two former; namely, that although the moral law in general is founded on the nature of things, or on the relations of man to his Maker and to his fellow-creatures, yet some particulars are the subject of positive institution. I refer, as an example, to the fourth commandment, which is acknowledged to be partly moral, and partly positive; moral, as it requires the consecration of a part of our time to the immediate service of God; positive, as it appropriates a seventh part of it. God might have demanded a greater or a less portion, a fifth, or a tenth; or, instead of setting apart a whole day, he might have been satisfied with a part of each day. There was a reason for the selection of the seventh rather than of any other day, namely, because upon it God rested from the work of creation; but it has given place, as we Christians believe, to a new and stronger reason, and the Sabbath is changed from the seventh day to the first. I refer, as another example, to the law respecting marriage, by which the relation is forbidden to persons standing in certain degrees of consanguinity and affinity. According to the latitude in which the precepts of the Decalogue are to be interpreted, the prohibition is included in the seventh commandment. Whatever reason may be assigned for the prohibition, we cannot consider it as of the same immutable obligation with the precept, not to steal, or not to lie. It may be dispensed with, not by human authority, but by that of the Supreme Lawgiver; and accordingly, marriages within the forbidden degrees have been contracted with his express approbation. In the beginning of the world, the sons of Adam married their sisters; and, by the Mosaic law, if a man died without issue, his brother was required to marry his widow. Such marriages are now held to be incestuous. We may therefore say, that there is a mixture of moral and positive in the Decalogue; and there is truth in the old observation, that some things are commanded because they are just, and some are just because they are commanded. Those which are just because they are commanded, may be altered by the same will which enacted them; but those which are commanded because they are just, are of perpetual obligation. We have no example of the suspension or abrogation of a moral precept, unless we should view, as an instance of suspension, the permission to work on the Sabbath in cases of necessity and mercy; which, however, is not a deviation from the original design of the Law, because the Sabbath was made for man, that is, for his good, not man for the Sabbath. But we cannot regard in this light, the command to the Israelites to destroy the seven nations of Canaan. This was not a violation of the sixth precept; which, indeed, forbids one man to imbrue his hands in the blood of another, but reserves to God the right to dispose of his creatures; and in taking away their life, he may employ some of themselves, as the civil magistrate does not himself execute the law, but delegates another. Neither can we regard in this light, the command to the Israelites to borrow from the Egyptians. It seems to imply an authorized breach of morality; for borrowing involves a promise to restore, which the Israelites had certainly no intention to perform. But they received no such command. Our translation is unhappy; the original word signifies simply *to ask*. God directed the Israelites to ask

* Moral Philosophy, book i. chap. 6.
† Sermon on the Love of our Neighbour—*Note*.

jewels of gold and silver, and at the same time he disposed the Egyptians to grant their request. Thus he spoiled the oppressors of his people, and recompensed the latter for the hard service which they had so long performed: "The Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of all the people."*

On whatever ground the precepts of the moral law are supposed to rest, the reason that we are bound to obey them is the will of God. This makes them law to us, and not our perception of fitness or utility. That only is a law which proceeds from the will of a superior; obedience and authority are correlates, the one supposes the other. To us who enjoy revelation, questions concerning the abstract foundation of morality are unnecessary; and the best thing which can be said of them is, that they are idle speculators, because our morality will not constitute a part of religion, unless it proceed from love to God, or, in other words, from respect to his will. The man who belives that his duty is enjoined by the authority of God, possesses all the requisite knowledge for practical purposes, and, I may add, the true knowledge of the subject; for when we attempt to derive our obligations from any other source, we turn morality into a matter of calculation. The question with us is, not what is conformable to the nature of things, for in many cases this is a point about which we are incompetent to judge; or what is conducive to the general good, for here our views are too limited to decide; but what is agreeable to the will of our Maker; and this is easily ascertained by referring to his own authoritative declarations. Thus the knowledge of morality is brought within the reach of all who can read the word of God, or hear it read; and it is owing to this simple method of teaching it, that the illiterate in Christian countries have more comprehensive and accurate ideas than the most enlightened moralists of the heathen world.

Our Lord delivered a summary of duty on the following occasion, which is thus related by Matthew: "Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."† Love to our Maker and to our fellow-men is the principle of obedience. Our various duties are merely the development of it. It is the root, and they are the branches growing out of it, or the fruit which it yields. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets;" that is, the precepts delivered in the pentateuch, and in the prophetical writings, are the different modes in which love to God and to man is expressed, and they will be obeyed by every man in whom this love exists. "If there be any other commandment," says an Apostle, when speaking of the precepts of the second table, "it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."‡

But love is only the principle of obedience, the state of mind which leads to it; the mode in which it should be manifested, is the subject of positive prescription. The Decalogue is founded upon it, and points out the various ways in which we should express our love to God and to men; it was written upon two tables, the one containing the duties of which God is the immediate object, and the other the duties which we owe to our fellow-men. Yet these tables must be considered as exhibiting only a summary of duty. They do not enter into detail, but are general heads, from which particulars are to be deduced by ourselves, or are to be collected from the commentaries upon them, which are scattered up and down in the Scriptures. Certain rules have been laid down for the right interpretation of the law.

First, It should always be remembered that "the law is spiritual," as it is called by an Apostle;* and, consequently, that it requires something more than external conformity to its precepts. Most of the precepts, when literally understood, relate only to the outward conduct; as, "Thou shalt not kill;" "Thou shalt not steal," &c.; but the last, which says, "Thou shalt not covet," regulates the movements of the heart; and this instance clearly shows the spirit which pervades all the other precepts. It is an admonition in the close by the Lawgiver, that he ultimately regards the state of the mind. A human legislator aims at nothing more than the compliance of his subjects with the letter of the law. If they abstain from murder, theft, perjury, and other crimes, he does not concern himself with the motives; and, in fact, the heart lies beyond his jurisdiction. He cannot know the thoughts of other men, and observe what is passing in the interior of their souls. It is the same thing to him whether the laws are obeyed from conscience, from fear, or from a regard to self-interest; he has gained his end, when the peace of society is maintained. But the moral law has emanated from Him who is the Former of our spirits as well as of our bodies, has a right to the homage of both, and pays no regard to an action or a course of actions, unless the disposition from which it proceeds be such as he can approve. If a human governor could discover that the man who bows to him despises him in his heart, and that, amidst the most imposing appearances of respect, he harbours the feelings and the purpose of a traitor, he would set no value upon his hollow professions. The moral Governor of the universe sees the secret operations of the mind, and demands that we should serve him with our spirits as well as with our bodies. His law must therefore be understood to regulate the external sentiments and desires, as well as the actions to which they give rise, and to extend its authority in the first place to the former, as constituting what is most valuable in obedience. When it enjoins any duty, it enjoins the corresponding state of mind; when it forbids any sin, it forbids the appetite, or propensity which leads to it. In the Scriptures men are exhorted to "keep their hearts with all diligence, because out of them are the issues of life;"† that is, from them their actions receive their moral character or denomination. The spirituality of the law is implied in the principle upon which it is founded. It is the affection of love which is the source of all acceptable obedience.

Secondly, One species is used to denote all the different species of the same sin or duty; that is, when one form of a particular sin is forbidden, all the forms of that sin are forbidden; and when one form of a particular duty is enjoined, all the forms of that duty are also enjoined. The law says, "Thou shalt not kill;" but we must not limit this precept to the prohibition of actual murder alone. It forbids, at the same time, all injuries offered to the person of another, all malice and revenge, and all the expressions of malignant feeling. Our Saviour has authorized this explanation: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and, whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say unto his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of

* Exod. xi. 3. † Matth. xxii. 35—40. ‡ Rom. xiii. 9, 10.

* Rom. vii. 14. † Prov. v. 23.

the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire."* The law says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" but besides the sin specified, it forbids incest, fornication, unnatural lusts, and not these alone, but all sensual desires. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."† On the other hand, when we are commanded to have no other gods before God, we are commanded not only to acknowledge that he alone is the living and true God, but to make him the object of all the love, and reverence, and confidence, to which his infinite excellencies give him an unquestionable title. When he commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves, he commands us to esteem him for his virtues, to be grateful to him for his kindness, to sympathize with him in his infirmities, to comfort him in his sorrows, to assist him in difficulties; in a word, to perform all the good offices which love naturally suggests, and by which its sincerity is expressed.

In the third place, Negative precepts are contained in affirmative, and affirmative precepts in negative. When any duty is enjoined, the contrary sin is forbidden; and when any sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is enjoined. It has been said, that as in the Scriptures there are more things than words, so in the precepts and prohibitions there is more than the words express. The law is not to be subjected to that kind of interpretation which brings any thing out of any thing; but its sense is to be diligently explored. As the good prescribed by the law cannot be performed unless the opposite evil be guarded against, nor the evil prohibited be avoided unless the opposite good be performed, it follows, that negative precepts include the affirmative, and affirmative precepts the negative. When the law forbids us to steal, or to take away unjustly the property of our neighbour, it requires us to promote his temporal interests, as far as we have ability and opportunity. When it forbids us to kill, or unjustly to deprive him of life, it commands us to use the means of preserving his life, to give him the counsel, the warnings, and the assistance which are necessary for his safety. In these cases, affirmative precepts are included in the negative. When the law commands us to honour our parents, it forbids neglect of them, contempt for them, or the doing of any thing which may be injurious or offensive to them. When it commands us to sanctify the Sabbath, it forbids all worldly employments and recreations, and every thing, in a word, which is inconsistent with the sacred rest and holiness of the day. In these instances, the negative precepts are included in the affirmative. It appears from the precepts of both kinds, that the duty of men consists not simply in abstinence from evil, but also in the practice of good; and we may farther infer, that the law of God is exceedingly broad, extending its authority in every direction, and subjecting the whole of human life to its control.

In the fourth place, When the law forbids a sin, it forbids all the causes of it; and when it enjoins a duty, it enjoins also the means by which we shall be enabled to perform it. Thus, when it prohibits uncleanness, it prohibits drunkenness and gluttony, and all the provocatives of the sensual appetites; when it prohibits theft, it prohibits covetous desires and idleness, which may prompt us to steal, by reducing us to want; when it enjoins justice, it enjoins diligence in business, prudence in conducting our affairs, and economy, that we may be able to satisfy every lawful demand upon us. And hence it follows, that if a man has brought himself by indolence, folly, and extravagance, into such a situation that he cannot pay his debts, he is not so much to be pitied as condemned, and instead of calling him unfortunate, we should say that he is criminal.

In the fifth place, Negative precepts are always binding, but positive precepts oblige only in certain circumstances. It is never lawful to murder, to steal, to commit adultery, to bear false witness against our neighbour. No situation can occur in which a man shall be permitted to do any of these things. The strongest temptations will not exculpate him. These precepts never bend to circumstances; a man is bound to refrain, although he should expose himself to the loss of his life. Positive precepts bind us always when the duties which they enjoin may be performed; but certain conditions are supposed, which may be wanting, and there are fit seasons, which do not always occur. We are required to honour our parents; but as the obligation ceases when they die, so, during their life, we cannot give them the usual tokens of honour, when we are removed to a distance from them. We ought to minister to the wants of the indigent; but to do so is not our duty, if we are ourselves so poor that we have nothing to spare. We ought to worship God, but we cannot be constantly engaged in acts of devotion. We must spend much of our time in prosecuting our business, and in conversing with our fellow-men about necessary affairs. The command requires us to worship him only at the stated times, and on such other occasions as are suggested by the state of our own minds, and the circumstances in which we are placed. It has been justly remarked, that the positive precept concerning love to God must be excepted, which is obligatory at all times; there being no season, place, or state, in which it is not our duty to love him with all our heart. We may make the same remark concerning love to our neighbour, which is also binding at all times; and the observation which has been made respecting positive precepts, relates only to the particular modes of expressing our love to both.

In the sixth place, There is another rule mentioned by Divines, which, however, is not directly to the purpose, as it does not help to interpret the law, but is intended to point out the relative importance of its duties. The rule is, that the precepts of the second table of the law must give place to those of the first, when both cannot be obeyed. The following instances have been given to illustrate the rule. The love of our relations must be subordinate to the love of God; and our Lord has said that we must hate father and mother, when fidelity to him requires us to do so.* Again, when the commands of our earthly superiors interfere with the commands of God, we must prefer the latter to the former. But these are rather apparent than real illustrations, because it will appear, on reflection, that in such cases there is no interference of duties. The authority of men over others is limited, and ceases the moment that it is exercised in requiring any thing unlawful. When the commands of parents and magistrates are opposed to the commands of God, there is no choice of duties; the will of God is the sole obligation which an enlightened conscience will acknowledge. Our duty to God and our duty to man must always be consistent, because the one is the measure of the other; and instead of talking loosely of a possible opposition between them, it is more accurate to say that, whatever human laws and customs may require from us, whatever natural affection or self-interest may prompt us to do, whatever our superiors may expect from us, their claims are unjust, and ought to be disregarded, when offence would be given to God by our compliance. As he is the First and the Last, so great that all other beings are as nothing when compared with him, we are always bound to sacrifice for

* Matth. v. 21, 22. † Ib. 27, 28.

* Luke xiv. 26.

his glory, all that is most tender and valuable in our connexion with our fellow-creatures. There can be no jarring moral obligations; and it is ignorance or inattention which makes them appear incompatible. We can never owe that to man which God claims for himself. Love to God is the first and great commandment; and the second, or love to our neighbour, is subordinate, but not contrary to it. It is remarkable that a case mentioned in Scripture, in which one duty is made to yield to another, relates to the first table. What is positive in it, gives place to what is moral in the second, according to these words, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," or, "rather than sacrifice."* We are permitted to violate the rest of the Sabbath by works of mercy, for the relief and preservation of men and animals, and by works of necessity, as the preparation of our food, the extinguishing of fire, the carrying away of property exposed to an inundation, &c. Let it be observed, that the law of the Sabbath is not repealed in such cases, but admits these exceptions, that other duties which cannot be deferred may be performed. The exceptions, if I may speak so, are a part of the law.

Lastly, I shall briefly mention one other rule,—that whatever the law requires us to do, we are bound to endeavour, in our several stations, to make others do. It is their duty to glorify God as well as ours; and zeal for his glory will excite us to use all lawful means that it may be promoted by them. This end is to be gained not only by our example, but by our instructions, and counsels, and entreaties, and reproofs, and by the proper exercise of our authority over those whom Providence has placed in subjection to us. Every man, for example, is bound to see the Sabbath sanctified by all under his roof; for thus says the law, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates."

These rules have been laid down for the interpretation of the law; and by the judicious application of them, with the assistance afforded by other passages of Scripture, we may deduce from the ten precepts of the decalogue all the duties which we owe to God and to man. It is a complete code of morality. As no man can attempt without impiety to take any thing from it, so there is no need that any thing should be added to it. When Socinians affirm that Christ has corrected and enlarged the law, they unjustly accuse it of imperfection in its original form; and they totally misapprehend the design of his commentaries upon it in the Gospels, which was not to new-model the law, but to free it from the corrupt interpretations which the Scribes had given of it, on the authority of tradition. He evidently recognized its perfection in his answer, formerly quoted, to the question, "Which is the first and great commandment?" and the Apostle Paul, who was enlightened by his Spirit, pronounced it to be "holy, just, and good."†

The obligation of the moral law is universal. All men, in every region of the earth, are subject to its authority. It was the law given to man at his creation, from which his subsequent apostasy could not release him; it is founded in relations which subsist wherever there are human beings endowed with reason and volition. The other laws given to the Jews were national and local. The ceremonial law could not be practised in all its parts but within narrow limits. The temple could not be resorted to on all necessary occasions, nor the three annual festivals be observed in Jerusalem by persons whose usual residence was in the remote countries of Asia, Africa, and Europe. It does not appear that circumcision was incumbent upon any but the descendants of the twelve patriarchs, with whose father, Abraham, the covenant was made; nor is it to be supposed that if a heathen, at a great distance from Jerusalem, had attained to the knowledge of the true God, and became a devout worshipper of him, he was bound to conform to the Mosaic ritual, and that his sacrifices would not have been accepted if they were offered upon any other altar than that of Jerusalem. There is no doubt that then, as well as now, in every nation, he who feared God and wrought righteousness was accepted of him.* The peculiarity of the judicial law is still more unquestionable. It was the civil law of the Jews, intended solely for the government of their nation; to which, therefore, other nations were not more subject than men living in one country are at present subject to the laws of another. Nay, some things are enjoined upon the Jews, which by other nations are considered as unlawful; for example, the marriage of a widow to the brother of her deceased husband who had died without children. The ceremonial law is therefore abolished, as is also the judicial law, so far as it did not embody the moral precepts, which are of perpetual obligation. But while the authority of certain ordinances, religious and civil, extended only to the Jews, the decalogue is the law of all nations. Morality is not the subject of positive institution, and of human regulation. It is not determined by geographical boundaries, so that what is right on one side of a river or mountain is wrong on the other, and virtue and vice exchange characters according to changes of climate. Piety towards God, truth, justice, and charity towards men, and the exercise of temperance, or self-government, are duties in every country under heaven. The moral law is the rule of our present conduct, and will be the rule of our future judgment.

From what has been said, it is evident that the obligation of this law is perpetual. As it binds all men who at present exist, it will for the same reason bind all succeeding generations. It has constituted an essential part of all the divine dispensations. It was the rule of duty to man in his primeval state, and obedience to it was the condition of the covenant into which his Maker entered with him in the name of his posterity. It was solemnly promulgated to the Israelites from Sinai, and a curse was denounced upon every man who should not continue in all the things which were written in it to do them. Jesus Christ has adopted it into his religion, re-enacted it, if I may speak so, by his authority, and commanded all his disciples to conform to it. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil it; and as he himself obeyed its precepts, and submitted to its sanction, by dying in the room of his people, so he declared it to be his own law, and admonishes us that he will disown every man who neglects or violates its precepts, whatever respect he may profess for him. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"† There cannot be a more erroneous view of his religion than to suppose, that it sets men free from the obligations of morality. The error first made its appearance in the apostolic age, as we learn from the epistle of James, which was written to refute those who expected to be saved by a faith not accompanied with works; and it has been adopted in succeeding ages, because it accords so well with the natural wish to enjoy impunity in sin. We pronounce the man to be a heretic who denies the Trinity, or the atonement, or original sin, or justification by faith, or the necessity of the influences of the Spirit; but be assured that there is not a greater heresy than to teach that by the gospel we are exempted from the authority of the law. It transforms the holy religion of Christ into a system of impurity; it turns the grace of God into licentiousness.

* Matth. ix. 13. † Ib. xxii. 57. Rom. vii. 12.

* Acts x. 35. † Luke vi. 46.

The moral law is an emanation from the holiness of God; and when it is imprinted upon our hearts by the Spirit, we are changed into the image of God. To produce this effect is the design of the death of Christ, of his ministrations in heaven, of the operations of grace, the institutions of the Gospel, and the dispensations of Providence. Only the half of the work of redemption is performed, when men are delivered from the punishment of sin: to emancipate them from its dominion, to eradicate the love of it, to render them obedient to God, to inspire them with a sacred respect to his will, this is the other half, and is surely of equal importance. And the whole design will be accomplished when grace shall triumph in the pardon of their sins, and the complete sanctification of their souls; and the love which the law requires shall reign without a rival in every heart, and shine in every action.

LECTURE CIII.

ON THE LAW OF GOD.

Division of the Decalogue into two Tables.—Statement of the Sins Forbidden and Duties Enjoined in the First, the Second, and the Third Commandments.

HAVING made some general observations upon the law, and laid down general rules to be observed in explaining it, I proceed to consider its precepts in their order.

It was originally written upon two tables, in order, it should seem, to distinguish the two classes of precepts which the decalogue contains. This is the only reason which we can conceive why it was engraven upon two tables rather than upon one. There have been different opinions, however, respecting the division of the precepts. Josephus assigns five to each table, and has been followed in this arrangement by one or two authors; but their mistake is evident. The precepts naturally fall under the two general heads of love to God and love to man; and to the first none properly belong but four, which immediately respect our Maker; the other six being the modes in which our love to man should be expressed. Besides, when the Apostle calls the fifth precept, "the first commandment with promise,"* we are sure that he does not mean that it is the first in the decalogue; and we must understand his words to import, that it held the first place in the second table delivered to Moses. Some assign to the first only three precepts, not by transferring the fourth to the second table, but by joining together the first and the second, because they consider the latter as a continuation of the former. This was the idea of some of the Fathers, and it has been adopted by the Church of Rome, for an obvious reason. Standing separately, it forbids the use of images in the worship of God, and plainly condemns the practice of that church; but viewed as an appendix to the first precept, it only forbids, as they pretend, the worship of the images of false gods; and, consequently, leaves them at liberty to worship the images which they have consecrated to the honour of the true God and his saints. They seem, however, to be sensible of the weakness of this argument, and for this reason have been accustomed to leave it out of their books which were intended for the inspection of the people, lest, being incapable of entering into their subtile distinctions, and interpreting the law according to its obvious sense, they should begin to suspect that the service in which they are daily engaged is idolatry. The surest way to prevent a discovery is to dismiss the witness, without allowing him to speak. Two precepts being turned into one, there remain only nine; and the question therefore occurs, Where are the ten? To solve this difficulty, Papists split the tenth precept into two, making "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house," one; and the words which follow, another. We cannot give this division the praise of ingenuity; we must call it barefaced impudence. There never was a precept delivered by any lawgiver, which was more clearly one and indivisible. The whole of it relates to one subject, covetousness, or unlawful desire; and the words, "Thou shalt not covet," are repeated merely to enforce the prohibition, by prefixing it to the different classes of objects which ought not to excite our cupidity. The Apostle Paul speaks plainly of it as one precept, when he says, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."*

The four precepts of the first table of the law relate immediately to God. The first points out the object of worship; while it forbids us to have any other God before him, it calls upon us to acknowledge and worship him alone. The second prescribes the means of worship, not by images or any other plan of human invention, but by the rites and ordinances which are divinely appointed. The third declares the manner in which the service of God should be performed, namely, with reverence, as opposed to profaneness and every abuse of religious institutions. The fourth specifies the time of worship, to-wit, one day in seven, which is to be wholly devoted to God; not however to the exclusion of other seasons which the events of providence may point out, and the regular devotional exercises of every day.

We shall begin with the first commandment. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." In explaining the precepts, whether negative or positive, our church-catechism lays down first what is required, and secondly, what is forbidden. It is not material what order is observed, provided that the import of the precepts is unfolded; but the most natural mode, I apprehend, of expounding a negative precept, is first, to show what it forbids, and then, according to the rule formerly mentioned, to give an account of the opposite duties which it enjoins.

This precept forbids, in the first place, atheism, which may be divided into explicit and constructive. Explicit atheism consists in the formal denial of the existence of God. He is an atheist who excludes from the universe any other intelligence than that of the human mind; says that it is eternal; that there is nothing in it but matter and motion, and talks of nature, and chance, and fate,—words which have no meaning, but serve as a substitute in discourse for the name of a living, designing Agent, by whom all things were created and are governed. Atheism is so contrary, not only to the general sentiments of mankind, but to the clearest deductions of reason, that some have supposed it to be impossible that any man could be an atheist, and have thought that those who were reputed atheists in ancient times were falsely charged with this crime, because they treated the gods, who were commonly worshipped, with contempt. It is not necessary to examine whether this opinion is true or false, because, whatever judgment may be pronounced upon certain old philosophers, some of the moderns have put the matter out of doubt by an undisguised avowal of their unbelief. Atheists have appeared in our own age, and in our own country.—By constructive atheism, I mean sentiments which amount to the denial of God, or lead to this conclusion, although they do not formally express it. Such atheism was charged upon Epicurus and his followers, who, as Cicero says, granted in words that there were gods, but in reality took them away, because they represented them as removed to a distance from

* Eph. vi. ii.

* Rom. vii. 7.

mortals, and taking no interest in their affairs. The charge may be brought, with equal justice, against those who deny the providence of God; who consider him as limited in essence and knowledge, as did the elder Socinians; or divest him of any of his attributes, and substitute in the room of the transcendently just and all-perfect Being of the Scriptures, a God fashioned according to their own likeness, an idol of their own brain. Under this head, we may include what is called practical atheism, by which is meant such conduct as virtually contradicts the profession of the lips; and accordingly, an Apostle speaks of some, "who profess to know God, but in works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate."* And certainly the man, whose profane and lawless conduct indicates that he has renounced the authority of God, or calls in question his omnipotence and his justice, is guilty of violating the precept,—which requires a practical, and not merely a verbal, acknowledgment of him,—as well as the man who ventures to impugn his existence.

In the second place, this precept forbids polytheism. Idolatry was introduced long before the time when the law was published from Sinai. It existed in Chaldea while Abraham sojourned there; and it seems that this patriarch was a worshipper of false gods before he was called to leave his country and his kindred. By the time of the Exodus, the evil had spread far and wide; and we have reason to believe that polytheism prevailed among all nations, although there might still be some individuals who continued exclusively to adore the Creator of heaven and earth. The design of the call of Abraham was to separate his descendants from the apostate race, and to constitute them a peculiar people, among whom the knowledge and worship of Jehovah should be preserved till the fulness of time, when he would again reveal himself to the nations of the world, and destroy the gods of the Gentiles. We see, therefore, a peculiar reason for this command, and for the solemn words with which it is introduced: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." He had manifested himself as the God of the Israelites by their recent redemption, in accomplishing which he had shown himself to be greater than the deities of their oppressors, according to his words to Moses, "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment;" and they who had witnessed the displays of his power were bound to worship him alone. By this precept, the religions of all heathen nations are condemned. They are directly opposed to the fundamental doctrine of the unity of the Divine essence; and they either exclude the true God, or they associate others with him as sharers in the honours to which he alone is entitled.

If the polytheism of the Gentiles is condemned by this precept, there can be no doubt that the worship given to saints and angels in the Church of Rome is equally forbidden. Churches are dedicated to them as well as to God; the most solemn services of religion are performed in honour of them; pilgrimages are undertaken to the places which they are understood to favour, and in which their pretended relics are deposited; they are invoked in the most humble postures, and in the usual forms of supplication; their assistance is implored, and thanks are returned to them for benefits which they are supposed to have conferred; and, in short, they receive all the honours which the heathens pay to their male and female deities, and all the honours which are paid to God himself. Papists pretend that they make a distinction in the kind or degree of worship, and call that which is given to God *latria*, and that which is given to the saints *dulia*.* This is an arbitrary use of the terms, which, in the Greek language, are promiscuously employed to express services performed to God, or to men. When they tell us, therefore, that they worship God with *latria*, and the saints with *dulia*, they tell us nothing but what any other two words in the Greek language would have expressed equally well, namely, that they do not give precisely the same kind of worship to both. But, however much they may distinguish in theory, the greater part make no distinction in practice. The saints are honoured as highly as God, and in some cases more. Their churches are more frequented; more vows and offerings are made to them; and when it is supposed that, for the sake of the respect which has been punctually shown to them, a whole life of sin will be forgiven, is not the creature exalted above the Creator?

It is quite unnecessary to enter into the controversy on this subject between Protestants and Papists, and to examine the distinctions by which the latter endeavour to evade the charge of idolatry. If the Gentiles were condemned by an Apostle because they did service to them who by nature were not Gods, we cannot see how pretended Christians should be excused who address their worship to similar objects. It will not be denied that the latter are not Gods by nature; and if there was a reason why the heathen deities should not be worshipped, it holds equally good with respect to angels and saints, who are as really creatures as those who adore them. Their physical and moral qualities, the rank to which they are elevated, and the happiness which they enjoy, make no difference; still they want what is the sole foundation of religious homage, a divine nature and divine perfections, infinite knowledge, almighty power, and inexhaustible goodness. It would make no difference, although, as Papists suppose, they were invested with authority over men; because it would be infinitely inferior to that of the Supreme Lord, and could entitle them to nothing more than a degree, proportioned to their dignity, of the respect which we owe to our earthly superiors. But their authority is taken for granted, and cannot be proved from Scripture. With regard to any intercourse between the glorified saints and men in the present state, it maintains profound silence; and the angels it represents, not as rulers, but as servants: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation?"*

The practice of the Church of Rome is directly in the face of the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." They do not expressly call the saints gods, although they distinguish them by the title of *divi*, which the heathens gave to their deified heroes and princes; but he is acknowledged as a God, to whom we pray, and on whom we depend for temporal and spiritual blessings, whatever name we appropriate to him. Their practice is contrary to the words of the law quoted by our Saviour, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."† It is vain to pretend that this command is obeyed by giving supreme worship to him, and subordinate to others; for the manifest design of it is to appropriate all religious worship to him; and besides, two kinds of worship are a mere human figment, of which not a trace is found in the Scriptures. There is not a precept for the worship or religious invocation of creatures; nor an example, except among the heathens, and some obscure heretics in the apostolic age, who first introduced the idolatry which the Church of Rome has since patronized, and who were condemned for worshipping angels by Paul in the Epistle to the Colossians. In a word, it is certain that the invoca-

* Tit. i. 16.

† According to classical usage, *latreia* is the service of a hireling; *loutreia*, that of a slave. In the N. T. the former expresses service of any kind, more especially religious service, or worship; the latter is used only with reference to the servile condition, or relation of slaves. B.

* Heb. i. 14. † Matth. iv. 10.

tion of the saints was unknown in the primitive church, as some popish writers of great eminence have acknowledged. It rests solely upon the authority of the church, which, in matters of religion, is not worth a rush.

Negative precepts virtually enjoin the duties opposed to the sins which they forbid. The first commandment requires us to have our mind fully established in the doctrine of the existence of God; and to acknowledge him only, to the exclusion of every rival, whether set up by Heathens or by idolatrous Christians. It requires us to entertain worthy sentiments of his character and perfections; and with this view to attend to the discoveries which he has made of himself in his works, and particularly in his word. It requires us to be duly affected by those discoveries, to cherish and exercise the affections of which he is the proper object, as reverence for his majesty, profound humility, trust in his promises, desires for his favour, dependence upon his care, and submission to his will; and in a word, to love him with all our strength, preferring him to all creatures in heaven and on earth, cultivating communion with him, and deriving our satisfaction from the uncreated source of felicity. It requires us to render to him the honour to which he is entitled, not only by those affections of our hearts, but by such outward expressions of homage as he himself has prescribed,—to pray to him, to praise him, and devoutly to observe all his institutions. It requires us to make him our last end; and as he has created all things for his glory, to have this as our predominant wish and constant aim, that we may glorify him with our bodies and our spirits, which are his.

This is a summary of the duties enjoined by the first precept, upon which it would be easy to enlarge; but an enumeration and illustration of them will be found in any exposition of the Decalogue. It is evident that an acknowledgment of God, does not complete the design of the precept, unless it be accompanied with those feelings and actions which are included in the idea of piety. A man may be a Theist, and yet a transgressor of this law, because he does not fear, and love, and serve, that great and glorious Being in whose existence he professes to believe.

Let us proceed to the second precept, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." I have already hinted what is the difference between this and the first commandment. The first declares the object of worship, and the second prescribes the means, forbidding the use of images, and consequently of every other form which has not been appointed by himself. It is unnecessary to enter into a critical examination of the words translated "graven image," and "likeness;" because it is plain to every person who is willing to understand, that they signify every external representation of visible or invisible objects employed for religious purposes.

It is obvious that the making of images is not absolutely forbidden, as some persons have supposed. It is no transgression of this precept to form representations of terrestrial or celestial objects for amusement and ornament, or to recall the memory of the dead, and to do honour to those who have deserved well of their country, or of mankind. It is an over-straining of the law to expound it as being hostile to the fine arts of statuary and painting. If the design of the precept be considered, which is manifest from its connexion, it will be found to relate solely to religion, and to condemn images and likenesses, whether engraven or drawn with the pencil, only when they are made the objects or the means of worship. The admission of images of the saints into churches, where the adoration of them is not permitted, cannot be justly considered as a violation of this precept; for you may make a statue or a picture of a saint as well as of any other man, and may place it in a church as well as in a palace, provided that no abuse is likely to ensue; and the practice is chiefly condemnable, because it seems to symbolize with idolatry, and because it may tend to it by an undue impression upon the imaginations and feelings of the ignorant.

This precept absolutely condemns all representations of God, which it is astonishing that any person should have attempted, who believed that his essence is spiritual and immense: "The Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice."* What madness is it to imagine that any configuration of matter bears a resemblance to a Being who has no bodily parts! or, that a puny statue can convey an idea of him whom the heaven and the earth cannot contain! "To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." It is true that the Almighty is described as the "Ancient of days, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool;"† but does it follow that Papists may exhibit him in the form of an old man? Do they not know that this was an emblematic vision; and that, in whatever manner God might reveal himself to the eyes or to the imagination of a prophet, we are expressly prohibited to portray him in any visible shape? By every attempt of this kind, he is highly dishonoured; he is degraded to a level with his creatures, and the glory of the incorruptible God is changed into the image of corruptible man. It is equally improper to represent the Holy Ghost under the figure of a dove; first, because it is not certain that he appeared in this figure at the baptism of Christ,—the words of the Evangelist perhaps signifying only the apparent motion of the sign which indicated his descent,—and, secondly, because if the visible shape was that of a dove, it was an emblem; the design of which is perverted when it is changed into an image of that Divine Person, who has no corporeal form and lineaments. It may seem that it is more justifiable to make an image of our Saviour, because he was and is a man. But the vanity of such images is evident, because they are not true representations of the object, and have their origin solely in the imagination of the statuary or the painter. The only account which antiquity has transmitted to us of the personal appearance of our Saviour, is apocryphal. But although the account were true, and an image were modelled in exact conformity to it, it might be asked, Does it resemble him now in his glorified state? And, besides, it is not the human nature of Christ which our minds should contemplate, but the incarnate Redeemer, God and man in one person; and his person can be represented by no material form. Images of him as a man, with a glory encircling his head, and images of him hanging on the cross, are teachers of lies.

Farther, This precept forbids images, although they do not profess to be similitudes of any of the persons of the God-head, but are only intended to be emblematical representations. Every visible form which is designed to recall God to our thoughts, and to excite our devotions, and before which we perform our religious offices, is prohibited. The precept is delivered in the most comprehensive terms: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any likeness of any thing which is in the heavens above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth." There is a reference to the images used by the Gentiles, which were of various forms, and were representations of objects in all the departments of nature; and they are all without exception condemned. They may be distinguished into two classes; some of them represented the false gods whom they worshipped, as Baal and Ashtaroth among

* Dent. iv. 12. † Dan. vii. 9.

the eastern nations, and in the west, Jupiter, Apollo, and Minerva. The worshipping of such images was properly a transgression of the first commandment, which requires us to give religious honours to Jehovah alone. Others again represented by emblems the Creator of heaven and earth, as the golden calf which the Israelites made in the wilderness, after the example of the Egyptians, who worshipped a sacred bull as the representative of Apis, one of their gods. It is remarkable that the feast which they proclaimed is called a feast to Jehovah. It is against the use of such images that the second commandment is directed. The error which it condemns relates, not to the object of worship, but to the manner of worshipping him; and the use of images is specified as the grossest and most palpable violation of the precept.

The advocates of image worship endeavour to evade the precept by subtile distinctions. They tell us that there are two kinds of adoration, the one absolute and the other relative, and that the image is the object only of relative worship; that is, the worship does not terminate upon the image itself, but passes from it to the original. Again they tell us, that in an image two things are to be considered,—the matter of which it is composed, gold, silver, wood, or stone, and its representative character. Considered as a material substance, it ought not to be adored; but as an image or representation it is entitled to respect. These however were the identical distinctions by which the heathens attempted to vindicate themselves, when they were accused of idolatry by the Christians. It was only relative worship which they offered to their idols; the ultimate objects of their adoration were the invisible beings whom they believed to be divine. They were not so stupid as to think, that any kind of matter was in itself the proper object of worship; the image did not begin to be honoured, till having been finished by the hand of the artist, it was consecrated to the service of the god for whom it was designed. As Papists find it necessary to defend themselves with the arguments of the heathens, it is plain that they are guilty of the same crime and involved in the same condemnation. All their subtilties vanish before the plain words of the precept, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, and serve them."

Our church says, that "the second commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images, or in any other way not appointed in his word;"* or more fully in the larger Catechism, that it forbids "all devising, counselling, commending, using, and any wise approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself; corrupting the worship of God, adding to it or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever."† This exposition is founded on the principle already laid down, that when one species of a sin is forbidden, all the other species of the same sin are also forbidden. There is no doubt a particular reason why images are forbidden, because they are in themselves dishonourable to God, by investing Him, who is a pure and infinite Spirit, with a corporeal form, and degrading him to a level with the lowest of his creatures. But the design of the precept was to establish this principle, that as God is the sole object of religious worship, so it is his prerogative to dictate the mode of it. This matter is of too much importance to be subjected to the regulations of human wisdom. To the mind of man, blinded as it is by sin, and misled by the imagination and the passions, observances might recommend themselves by the pretext of fitness and decency, which the Supreme Being would reject as incongruous to his nature and character. We see the childishness, the absurdity, and the impiety of its devices in the numerous rites of Heathenism, and in the multiplied services of those Christians, who have deformed the worship of God under the pretext of adorning it, and robbed it of its native purity by arraying it in the meretricious garb of superstition. The precept which we are now explaining condemns all will-worship, that is, all human inventions in the service of God. He has declared to us in his word what form is acceptable to him; and it is a high offence to add to it or take from it. We have an example of both crimes in the Church of Rome, which has mutilated some of the ordinances of Christ, and corrupted others by foreign mixtures and appendages. It has also introduced new ordinances, of which not a word is spoken in the Scriptures, as the use of images, prayer to the saints, five spurious sacraments, pilgrimages and penances, and a multitude of observances, which it would be tedious to mention. Nor are those protestants free from the charge who have retained some of the usages of popery, and enjoin the wearing of particular vestments by the ministers of religion, the sign of the cross in baptism, bowing at the name of Jesus, and kneeling at the Lord's Supper. These practices we justly call superstitious, because there is no scriptural warrant for them, and they are the devices of men. The question, "Who hath required this at your hands?" the abettors and advocates of will-worship cannot answer; and it were well if they would consider the words of God concerning the Jews, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."*

This precept requires us to entertain worthy ideas of God, as a spiritual Being, of whom no representation should be formed, either with the hand or by the imagination, and to honour him with spiritual worship. In particular, it requires us to adhere to his own institutions in opposition to all human devices, to receive them with due submission to his authority, to observe them with outward reverence and inward sentiments of devotion, to maintain them in their purity and integrity, exactly as he has delivered them to us, neither adding to them, as those do who make use of the sign of the cross in baptism, nor taking from them, as Papists do, who in the Lord's Supper withhold the cup from the laity. The ordinances of religion are prayer, praise, the preaching of the word, and the celebration of the sacraments; to which may be added church government, the exercise of discipline, and other particulars which it is unnecessary to mention. It is evident, as I have already hinted, that while the prescribed forms of worship should be punctually observed, the precept calls for those dispositions and exercises of mind of which they are significant, and which only can give them value, and render them acceptable to the omniscient God, who looks not upon the countenance, but upon the heart.

This precept is enforced by the following words: "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Here a difficulty occurs relating to the denunciation upon the posterity of transgressors. Some consider it as peculiar to the Jews, who were placed under a dispensation of temporal rewards and punishments, and understand it to import, that under such a dispensation, by the overruling providence of God, a man's family would be placed in such circumstances as should accord with his conduct, or that their degradation and suffering would be the effect of his sin; just as under human governments the children of traitors are deprived of their honours, and the family estate is confiscated, or

* Short. Cat. Q. 51. † Larg. Cat. Q. 109.

* Matth. xv. 9.

as in the common course of things, a person of profligate manners entails disease, and poverty, and disgrace upon his offspring. Others have thought that the denunciation relates to those who should imitate the conduct of their parents; and consequently, that it was for their own sin, and not properly for that of their parents, that they should be punished. But besides that the words thus understood constitute no sanction or enforcement of the precept, and do not serve the purpose for which they are manifestly introduced, it is impossible to assign a reason why the third and fourth generation only are mentioned, since it is certain that God will visit to the thousandth generation those who tread in the steps of their idolatrous ancestors. Others again are of opinion, that not only temporal but spiritual judgments are denounced; that for the sins of the parents God withholds his grace from their children; and that being left to themselves, they follow the example of their parents, and are finally punished for their own sins. There is a degree of confusion in this statement, which first admits that they are punished for the sin of their parents, and then brings forward their own sin to account for the justice of their final allotment. It is exceedingly difficult to determine the precise import of the words. If we could satisfactorily show that the threatening related to the Jews alone, and was founded on their peculiar dispensation, and that what was threatened was merely a temporal penalty upon the families of idolaters, considered as members of the state, it would be more easy to reconcile it to our ideas of the equity of the divine administration. There seems to be a contradiction between it and the words of God by Ezekiel: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father."* We might reconcile them by supposing the original law, which was merely a positive one, to be revoked; or we may consider the words of Ezekiel as referring to a particular case. The Israelites had adopted this proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,"† intimating that their present sufferings were owing not to their own sins, but to those of their ancestors. To repel this accusation against his procedure, God declares that the case was not as they supposed, that he was punishing them for their own sins; that it was far from him to confound the righteous with the wicked, and that every man among them should be rewarded according to his works.

The Third precept of the law is in these words, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

By the name of God, we understand the name or names by which he has made himself known, or is distinguished from other beings; as God, Lord, Jehovah, the Almighty, &c. To take this name, is to use it in discourse; and one form of using it, which claims our attention in the first place, is swearing by it. As a simple declaration may not be deemed sufficient, when the character of the speaker is unknown, his motives are suspected, or the matter is of too much importance to be lightly determined, men have been accustomed to demand the confirmation of it with an oath, or an appeal to God as the witness of our veracity, and the Judge who will punish us if we are guilty of deceit. Some ancient sects, and some modern, have denied the lawfulness of an oath, and have affirmed that it is sinful to swear upon any occasion. Their opinion is refuted by a variety of arguments. We have examples of oaths in the Old Testament, with directions how to swear, namely, in truth, judgment, and righteousness; and lest any should think that what was formerly tolerated is now prohibited, we have examples also in the New. When Paul says, "I call God for a record upon my soul"—"God is my witness"—"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost;"* his language in all these instances, and particularly in the two first, amounts to an oath. Our Saviour recognized the lawfulness of an oath, when one having been administered to him, according to the form of his country, he broke the silence which he hitherto observed, and answered the question of the High Priest.† It is impossible to understand the words of the Apostle in any other way than as a sanction of the practice, when he says, "Men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to the man end of all strife."‡ It is a misapprehension of our Saviour's words, "Swear not at all,"‖ to consider them as an absolute prohibition of an oath; because it is plain from his own illustration, that he meant only to forbid the practice of swearing in common conversation, and particularly of swearing by creatures.

An oath should be sworn only on such occasions as call for this solemnity, about matters of importance, and with respect to which satisfaction cannot be otherwise obtained. God is too great and awful a Being to be appealed to as a witness for every trifling purpose. It should be taken with external and internal reverence, and be regarded not as a mere ceremony, but as a religious insititution, which places us in the immediate presence of the Judge of men and angels. We should be fully acquainted with the subject of an oath; for, to swear to any thing of which we are ignorant, or about which we are in doubt, is at once to deceive men, and to set at nought the divine omniscience. We should take an oath according to the obvious meaning of it, in the sense in which it is understood by those who administer it, to the exclusion of all private interpretations, and all mental reservations. We ought to be sincere in giving a promissory oath, having a fixed intention to perform what we pledge ourselves to do, and never thinking ourselves released from the obligation except by such a change of circumstances as renders it physically impossible to redeem our pledge, or would make it sinful to do so, because some other duty of paramount authority has intervened. It is plain, therefore, that we should never bind ourselves by oath to do any thing which we know to be impossible, any thing which we know to be morally wrong, any thing which would impede our duty to God, or to such of our fellow-men as have a prior claim to our service and obedience.

The name of God is taken in vain when we swear unnecessary oaths; when we swear implicitly, without knowing beforehand the nature and extent of the obligation, when we swear lightly and irreverently, using the name of God with as little respect as we would show to that of a man; when we swear falsely, attesting that to be true, which we do not know to be true, or which we know to be false; when we do not regard the *animus imponentis*,§ but substitute a meaning of our own as a subterfuge, under which we may escape from the understood obligation; when we swear to what we know to be impossible, or what we know to be sinful; when we swear in doubt with respect to the practicability or the lawfulness of the action to which we bind ourselves; when we swear to release ourselves from a prior obligation, as the Jews devoted their property to God, that they might be relieved from the duty of supporting their parents.

These are not the only ways in which the name of God is profaned. It is taken in vain when it is lightly introduced in common conversation; when men swear by it in anger or in sport, or in the ordinary train of

* Ezek. xviii. 20. † Ib. 2.

* 2 Cor. i. 23. Rom. i. 9. ix. 1. † Matth. xxvi. 63.
‡ Heb. vi. 16. ‖ Matth. v. 34.
§ The intention or meaning of him who imposes the oath.

their discourse; when they utter impious imprecations upon themselves or others; or when, without the slightest feeling of devotion, they call upon him to bless, preserve, or help them. There is not a name in the universe with which so much freedom is used; it is treated as with studied contempt; and it is almost impossible to walk the streets, or to go into a mixed company, without hearing language which is always offensive to a pious ear, and which, were it heard for the first time, would awaken horror and alarm in every man who retained any sense of religion. In the commission of this gratuitous and heaven-daring sin, our own country has attained an infamous pre-eminence.

This precept is transgressed not only when men swear falsely, or profanely by the name of God, but also when they make use of any other oath in conversation; for in this, as in other precepts, all sins of the same kind are forbidden. Our Saviour says, "Swear not at all,"—that is, in common discourse,—"neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."* It appears that such oaths as are here specified were frequent among the Jews; and our Lord, in forbidding these, condemns all similar oaths, such as those which are current among Christians, who swear by their faith, their truth, their conscience, and in Popish countries, by the saints.

This precept forbids all kinds of blasphemy, all accusations of Providence, all reflections against Scripture, all dishonourable thoughts of God. It forbids the profanation or abuse of any thing by which he has made himself known. As it relates to the manner of worshipping him, it condemns irreverence, carelessness, formality, hypocrisy, and unbelief, in the performance of religious duties. We profane his word when we read or hear it with indifference; we profane the ordinance of prayer when we honour God with our lips but our hearts are far from him; when those sentiments of faith, and penitence, and holy desire are wanting, of which our words are expressive; we profane the ordinance of praise when we feel no admiration of his excellencies, and no gratitude for his favours, and when we appropriate to ourselves any share of the glory to which he has an exclusive title; we profane the Lord's Supper, not merely when we use it as a qualification for civil offices, but when we partake of it in a state of sin, in the absence of spiritual affections, without a cordial reliance upon the atonement which it commemorates, and an unreserved dedication of ourselves to him who died for us and rose again. We profane the ordinance of fasting, when our professions of repentance are not accompanied with humiliation of soul, when we use it as a means of obtaining the remission of our sins, or when we are careful to enumerate and condemn the sins of others, but slightly pass over our own. We profane Providence when we turn it to superstitious purposes, looking for signs from it to direct us where Scripture or even reason is sufficient to guide us; when we rashly and uncharitably interpret its proceedings; when we place an unwarranted dependence upon it, expecting the end without the means, venturing without a call upon danger in the hope of its protection, and trusting to it for the supply of our wants, when we are indulging ourselves in idleness.

From the sins forbidden in this commandment, it is easy to infer the duties required. They consist in general in a holy and reverent use of his name, of all his revelations, and all his institutions; and a more particular detail of them is unnecessary. It will be your business to trace them at your leisure, while you are meditating upon the subject. "The third commandment," says our Church, "requires that the name of God, his titles, attributes, ordinances, the word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, his works, and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word, and writing, by an holy profession, and answerable conversation, to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves and others."*

* Matth. v. 34—37.

LECTURE CIV.

ON THE LAW OF GOD.

Commentary on the Fourth, the Fifth, and the Sixth Commandments.

HAVING considered the object, the means, and the manner of religious worship, let us now attend to the time which is consecrated to it. It is determined in the Fourth precept of the Decalogue, which is expressed in these words: "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it."

After reciting this precept, which was delivered to the Israelites in the wilderness, we are to inquire, Whether it was then given for the first time, or was only promulgated anew? To most persons, an answer to this question seems to be supplied by the words of Moses, in the second chapter of Genesis, "And on the seventh day, God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."† These words have been commonly understood to signify, that the Sabbath was instituted at the creation. Some writers, however, are of a different opinion, and maintain that Moses speaks of it by anticipation; or that, as the reason why the Sabbath was given to men took place on the seventh day of the creation, he was led to make mention of it in this part of his narrative, although the observance did not commence till the Israelites were in the wilderness. In confirmation of this opinion, it is alleged that there is not a word said about the Sabbath during the long preceding period of two thousand and five hundred years; and that this silence is unaccountable, if it was regularly observed by the people of God. This, however, is merely a negative argument, from which no positive conclusion can be safely drawn; and, besides, it would disprove the practice of circumcision among the Jews from their entrance into Canaan to the circumcision of the Baptist, not one instance of it being recorded during that long interval. Another argument is founded on such expressions as these: God gave the Israelites a Sabbath, and he gave it for "a sign between him and them."‡ But his giving them the Sabbath, no more implies that it was a new institution, than his giving them the other precepts supposes that they were not previously binding,—nothing more being meant in both cases, than that they were published anew to them, with peculiar circumstances of solemnity. The Sabbath may be said to be a sign, because

* Larger Catechism, Q. 112. † Gen. ii. 2, 3.
‡ Exod. xxxi. 13, 17. Ezek. xx. 12, 20.

the celebration of it would henceforth serve, with their other religious rites, to distinguish them from the nations of the world, and it was enforced by a new reason taken from their recent redemption. Hence, in the repetition of the precept, these words are added: "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day."* There does not appear to be any reason for supposing that in Genesis Moses speaks proleptically, or by anticipation. The manner of the narrative would naturally lead any reader to suppose that he is relating what took place at the beginning of the world. It is a second thought, and a thought which could occur only to a mind in search of ingenious discoveries, that the present tense is here significant of the future. This seems to be a strong objection against the opinion which we are considering; it is inconsistent with the perfect simplicity of the Mosaic history, and with the accuracy which is expected from any historian, to record as a fact which took place at the period of which he is writing, what did not take place for five-and-twenty centuries. It has been observed, that the division of time into weeks, which subsisted in the age of the patriarchs, cannot be satisfactorily accounted for, but by the previous institution of the Sabbath; for the creation was finished in six days, and if the seventh was not then sanctified, we cannot conceive how the ancients came to divide time by seven days, rather than by six, or eight, or ten. It has been observed, too, that a peculiar respect was paid to the seventh day by the Greeks. Some may suppose that they derived their idea of its sacredness from the Jews, but it is more probable that it was founded on tradition. Not only the Hebrews, but the Greeks, says Clemens Alexandrinus, acknowledge the seventh day. Hesiod calls the seventh day λαμπρον φαος ηελιοιο, "the splendid light of the sun;" and Homer characterized it as ιερον ημαρ, "the sacred day." I neglected to remark in the proper place, that the "end of the days" when Cain and Abel offered sacrifices,† has been supposed to be the Sabbath; and that this also was the day, in the book of Job, when the sons of God came together.

It has been further observed, that the Sabbath is spoken of in Exodus before the publication of the decalogue, and is then mentioned, not as new, but as an institution already known: "To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord."‡ Some, indeed, draw an opposite conclusion, and consider these words as the first intimation of the Sabbath; but I think they are mistaken, because Moses appears only to remind them of it, as the reason of the injunction to gather a double quantity of manna on the preceding day, since none would fall on the next. If the Sabbath had been a new institution, he would have naturally informed them of its duties, whereas he confines himself to the single subject of the manna, forewarning them not to expect it on that day, and therefore to collect and prepare on the day before as much as would suffice till the Sabbath was past. It has also been thought, that the word with which the precept begins supposes a prior knowledge of the law. "*Remember* the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy." It was an institution with which they were already acquainted; and they are called upon to keep in mind the sacred nature of the day, and to sanctify it with the greatest care, especially after this solemn republication of the precept. It is probable that it had been much neglected in Egypt; and as the Israelites were in a state of slavery, it is not likely that they would be permitted by their cruel task-masters to desist from work one day in seven. Through the necessity of their circumstances, and their own indifference, the observance of it might have been in a great measure suspended, and this may be the reason why it was inculcated anew, and their attention was so particularly called to it: "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy."

The question respecting the date of the Sabbath is of the greater importance, because it is understood to affect the question respecting its morality. If it was given in the beginning, it is a law to mankind, binding in all ages and nations; if it was first given in the wilderness, it was a law to the Jews, which was abrogated with their other peculiar institutions; and some new evidence is necessary to prove that a day of rest should be observed by Christians.

There has been much discussion concerning the morality of the Sabbath, some affirming and others denying it; and several distinctions have been made with a view to ascertain what is moral, and what is positive, in the precept. In a former lecture, something was said upon this subject, when I was explaining the difference between moral and positive precepts.* It is a moral duty, that men should devote a portion of their time to the service of God, but the portion is the subject of positive command. Some express themselves as if they thought that the only thing which is positive in this precept is the prescription of the particular day; but if they use the term, moral, in its common acceptation when distinguished from positive, as signifying that which is founded in the nature of things, they will be at a loss to show that the nature of things, or the relation in which man stands to his Creator, requires that he should devote one day in seven to his immediate service. They will be at a loss to show that to have required more or less, would have been contrary to what is right and fit. It is acknowledged that the choice of the seventh day in preference to any other was positive; or that, although there was a reason for this choice, it was not permanent and immutable, so that no new reason could authorize a change to another day. It should also be acknowledged, in my apprehension, that the time allotted for the suspension of our worldly affairs, and undivided attention to the exercises of religion, might have been lengthened or shortened according to the good pleasure of God. It would have been more accurate in some of our Divines to have stated, that since a seventh part of our time has been required, the law is of perpetual obligation, instead of expressing themselves loosely, as if we were as much bound in the nature of things to set apart one day in seven, as it is acknowledged that we are to consecrate some portion of our time.

There is scarcely any difference of opinion among Christians with respect to the change of the day. Some learned men have thought that the original Sabbath was different from the Jewish, that the latter was put back from the first to the seventh day of the week; and they endeavour to prove this point by some facts in the history of the Israelites in the wilderness, and by the declaration that the Sabbath was given as a sign to them, and was intended to be a memorial of their deliverance from Egypt; to accomplish which purposes, it seems necessary that the day should have been altered. If this supposition could be satisfactorily proved, it might convince the Jews that the change, which Christians allege has now taken place in the day, is not unprecedented, and by no means involves an abrogation of the fourth precept of the Decalogue. It is not easy to see how it can be reconciled with the account in Genesis, which makes the seventh day the Sabbath; or how that day could be the first in a hebdomadal series, when it was preceded only by six.

For the change of the day from the seventh to the first, we cannot produce any positive precept; but we

* Deut. v. 15.
‡ Exod. xvi. 23.
† Gen. iv. 3, *marginal reading*.

* Lect. cii.

consider the example of the Apostles and of the primitive church under their direction as of equal authority, because they were infallibly guided by the spirit in all things relative to doctrine and worship. Immediately after the resurrection of Christ, the disciples began to assemble on the first day of the week; and by meeting repeatedly with them on that day, he gave countenance to the practice. It was continued after his ascension, and the mission of the Holy Ghost to lead them into all the truth. Thus at Troas, "when the disciples came together on the first day to break bread, Paul preached to them;* and the time of meeting is manifestly mentioned as the usual one. On that day the Corinthians were commanded to "lay by them in store, as the Lord had prospered them;"† and it is reasonable to think that the first day was specified as the proper time to make collections for the poor, because it was consecrated to religious duties. It is undoubtedly the same day to which the beloved disciple refers, when he says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day;"‡ the day which Jesus Christ peculiarly claimed as his own, or the first day of the week, which is consecrated to his honour. It has been supposed that the change of the day is predicted in the following words of Ezekiel, when he is giving a description of the mystical temple, which may be considered as a figure of the Christian Church: "Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it; and they shall consecrate themselves. And when these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make you burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord God."‖ This language is symbolical; the allusions are to the ceremonial services of the temple. Something is manifestly predicted which was never literally fulfilled; but, as the whole refers to a new state of things, the mention of the eighth day as the day of solemn sacrifices may well be considered as an intimation that the eighth day in order from the beginning of the Jewish week, or the Christian Sabbath, was henceforth to be holy to the Lord.

If the finishing of the works of creation was a reason why the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it, there is a reason at least equally strong for the consecration of the first day, on which our Saviour rose from the grave. Then the work of redemption was finished; and on account of its greatness and glory, and the unspeakable benefits which it has procured to mankind, it is worthy to be held in remembrance in all generations. The first day of the week is dedicated to the memory of the resurrection, by which God publicly testified that his incarnate Son had finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. And as there will be no new work of the Almighty of superior or equal importance, the day will not be altered, but will be kept sacred to the end of the world.

The Jews were enjoined to observe the Sabbath with the utmost strictness. They were not to go out of their houses, or to take journeys, except to a place of worship; and the distance to which, according to the Rabbies, they might lawfully go, was two thousand cubits, or about two-thirds of an English mile, which is called in the new Testament a Sabbath-day's journey. They were not to kindle a fire in their dwellings, that is, I presume, for the purpose of dressing victuals; for surely they were not forbidden to kindle a fire to warm themselves. They once deemed it unlawful to defend themselves on the Sabbath; but experience made them change their opinion, although they continued to think it a sin to attack their enemies on that day.

Amongst Christians, there has been a difference of sentiment respecting the degree of strictness with which the Sabbath should be observed. Some are for retaining all the rigour of the Jewish law, while others insist that now its severity is relaxed; and this view has been adopted by some of the most eminent among the foreign Protestant Divines. It is possible so to overstrain the duties of the day, as to make men think that they can hardly speak, or move, or look around them without violating its sanctity; and thus to give the Sabbath a gloomy and forbidding aspect. It is possible to grant such liberty, that it shall resemble a human festival rather than a season of devotion, a day of idleness, gossiping, and amusement, mixed up with some religious offices. We know how loosely it is observed in Roman Catholic and many Protestant countries, in the southern division of our island, and even in the northern, although our notions of the sanctification of the Sabbath have been carried as high as by any denomination of Christians.

This precept requires us to set apart for the service of God, one whole day in seven, reckoned like other days, according to our mode of computing time, from twelve o'clock at midnight to twelve next night. The Jews reckoned from sunset to sunset. It requires us to abstain from our worldly employments, manual and mental, from the labours of the body and the labours of the mind about secular studies, and from all unnecessary words and thoughts respecting such subjects. It requires us to spend the whole time, when we are awake, in devotional exercises, in prayer, religious reading, and meditation, in the instruction of our families, and pious conversation with them and our friends, and in attendance upon the public ordinances of grace. It requires us to abstain from those innocent recreations and amusements by which the body and the mind are refreshed and gratified, because we can very well dispense with them for one day, since we are at liberty to use them on the other six: they would engross a portion of the time which is sacred to other purposes, and would dissipate our thoughts, and indispose us for the proper duties of the Sabbath. "The Sabbath," our Confession says, "is then kept holy to the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations; but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy."*

He who understands in what the sanctification of the Sabbath consists, has no need that the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment should be pointed out to him. A detail of them is at least unnecessary at present, when I am addressing those who are capable of tracing the particulars I have mentioned into all their ramifications and consequences.

You would observe that in the quotation from our Confession of Faith, works of necessity and mercy are not considered as a violation of the sanctity of the Sabbath. By the former, are meant works which could not have been done on the preceding day, and cannot be deferred till the next. We must kindle fires in our houses; we must travel to and from the house of God; we must look after some parts of our property, as our flocks and herds; we must guard it when it is exposed to danger; we must use means to extinguish a conflagration, and carry away goods which would be destroyed by it, or by a sudden inundation. These duties arise from circumstances over which we have no controul. They will not wait till we find time to attend to them, but must either be done now, or not done at all; and as the Sabbath was made for man, they were permitted, although literally they break in upon its rest.

* Acts xx. 7.
‡ Rev. i. 10.
† 1 Cor. xvi. 2.
‖ Ezek. xliii. 26. 27.

* Chap. xxi. 8.

Works of mercy are those which are performed from compassion to our fellow-creatures. The care of cattle may be placed under this head, as well as under the former. No man is required, under the pretext of resting from his works on the Sabbath, to leave them to suffer from hunger and thirst. On the same principle, we may carry food and raiment to the poor, when their demands are urgent and we had not a previous opportunity of attending to them. We may visit the sick, administer cordials and medicines to them, dress their wounds, and perform other offices by which they will be soothed and relieved. It is on this ground that we deem it lawful for physicians to practice upon the Sabbath. It is a gracious institution, designed for the good of man in this world, as well as for his salvation in the next; and it does not interfere with any service immediately called for, which will contribute to either.

The time appropriated to the service of God is one day in seven, and, under the Christian dispensation, the first day of the week. I need not repeat, that there ought also to be a daily worship of God, and that the duties of the Sabbath do not release us from devotion during the week. But this is the only day which God claims as his own in a peculiar sense: he has given us the other six days to pursue our secular employments. It follows, that men have no right to institute holidays, which return as regularly at certain intervals as the Sabbath does in the beginning of the week. This is an assumption of authority which God has not delegated to them. Holidays are an encroachment upon the time of which he has made a free gift to men for their worldly affairs; and although enforced by civil and ecclesiastical laws, they are not binding upon conscience. No man sins in not observing them; but he does sin, if he observes them from an opinion of their holiness. Men may set apart particular days for fasting and thanksgiving; but those are only occasional, and not the days, but the services, are holy. As for all stated days of worship besides the Sabbath, they are human enactments; and there is no obligation upon any man to observe them but the general one, which requires us to conform to the practice of the church, when it is not sinful or superstitious.

The Second table of the law prescribes our duty to man, which is in fact our duty to God, because he enjoins it; but it is called our duty to man, because he is the immediate object of it. The First precept of the second table, which is the Fifth of the Decalogue, is in these words; "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The general design of it is to inculcate relative duties; and in the usual manner, it gives a specimen in the duties of children to their parents. There are various relations subsisting among mankind, which are founded partly in nature and partly in convention. They are naturally related to one another; more generally, as they are sprung from one common stock, for "God has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth;"* and more particularly, as they are descended from the same immediate or remote ancestors. There are other relations which, although agreeable to nature, or to the constitution and circumstances and wants of men, are yet founded in convention or mutual compact. Of this description are the relations of husbands and wives, masters and servants, magistrates and subjects. The duties resulting from them are comprehended in the precept; and they are made the subject of positive prescriptions, because they are of great importance, intimately connected with the order and happiness of society, and more effectually to secure the performance of them by the authority of religion.

* Acts xvii. 26.

The duty of children to their parents is expressed by honouring them, a general term under which many particulars are comprehended. They ought to love their parents, to reverence them in their hearts, and treat them with outward respect; to obey their lawful commands; to conform to the regulations which they establish in their families; to entertain a grateful sense of all the care and kindness which they have experienced from them; to acknowledge them in any important step which they take; to assist and support them according to their ability, if they are in such circumstances as to be dependent upon them; and to continue their good offices during the joint lives of themselves and their parents. In the early part of life, when children are living with their parents, and are not yet qualified to think and act for themselves, or, although arrived at the years of discretion, are still lodging under their roof, their subjection to their parents is more complete than after they have separated from them, and have houses and families of their own; but at no period are they released from the obligation to treat them with deference and affection, to comply with their reasonable wishes, and to perform such services as the comfort of their parents may require. We have an example in Joseph, who behaved with the utmost respect to his father, and the most solicitous attention to his happiness, after he was exalted to be next in rank to the king. Nature itself dictates the submission of children to their parents; it is enjoined by the laws of all civilized nations, some of which have carried it to excess, as the Romans unquestionably did, by making children as much the property of their father as his cattle, and giving him power to sell them as slaves, and to put them to death; and such was the severity of the Jewish law, that a froward rebellious son was capitally punished.*

The duties of children to their parents draw along with them the duties of parents to their children. There is required a reciprocity of good offices. Parents are bound to take care of their children in early life; to provide food and clothing for them; to give them an education which will prepare them both for this world and for the next, to watch over their morals, encourage them in good, and restrain them from evil; to exercise their authority reasonably and mildly, but firmly; to endeavour to settle them in life; to administer to them the counsels of experience; and, in a word, to consider them as a trust from God, which they ought to manage with incessant vigilance. I will not say, with some moralists, that the rights of parents result from their duties, because they originate in the Divine institution; but I will say, that a parent who neglects his duty to his offspring, ought not to be surprised if they fail in their duty to him, and has no right to complain either to God or to men.

The duties of husbands and wives are understood to be comprehended in this precept, and a detail of them usually constitutes one part of a commentary upon it. I do not say that this is wrong; but I should think that they occur more regularly under the seventh commandment, which according to the rules of interpretation formerly laid down, by forbidding the violation of the marriage vow, inculcates the duties arising from the conjugal relation.

I proceed therefore to speak of the duties of servants to their masters. These consist in respect for their masters as their superiors, submission to their authority, attention to their interests, honesty, diligence, and fidelity. The extent of their obedience is limited by their previous stipulation, whether expressed in words or established by custom. A general servant is bound to execute all the orders of his master; but a servant engaged for a particular purpose, is bound only to it, and is guilty of no breach of contract when he declines to

* Deut. xxxii. 18—21.

interfere with another department. There is, however, another limitation of the duty of both a general and a particular servant. A master has no right to command him to do any thing contrary to the laws of the land, and still less to do any thing which the law of God has forbidden; for example, to tell lies, to assist him in injustice or debauchery, to perform any unnecessary work on the Sabbath. With these exceptions, the subjection of a servant to his master is absolute, during the time of their connexion. The Apostle Paul makes use of strong language upon this subject, and it is worthy of attention, that, in his days, servants among the Greeks and Romans were slaves.: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men."*

Masters are bound to fulfil their part of the stipulation, by requiring nothing from their servants but what is just; by exercising their authority with mildness, avoiding every thing harsh in the matter or manner of their commands; by paying their wages, and bestowing the commendation which they have merited by their fidelity; by protecting them from injury and caring for them in sickness; by guarding against entertaining uncharitable suspicions of them, listening to calumnious reports of them, speaking hastily to their disadvantage, and showing an unrelenting, unforgiving spirit when they have committed a fault; and, in a word, by treating them as inferiors who at the same time are their fellow-creatures and Christians. To these may be added the religious duties of masters, who are bound to instruct their servants as well as their children, to excite them to observe the ordinances of grace, to reprove them when they are guilty of sin, and to encourage them in piety and virtue.

In the next place, The duty of subjects to their civil rulers claims our attention. It is evident that the duties of this class, like those of servants, are founded on convention or compact; because, with the exception of parents and children, between whom nature itself has established an inequality, all men possessed of reason are naturally equal in respect of personal rights, and become subject to others, either by violence, which establishes no moral obligation to submission, or by their own consent virtually or explicitly given. It is worthy of attention, that although the Scripture gives its general sanction to civil government, as necessary to the existence and good order of society, it still calls it an ordinance of man;† signifying that it is a human institution, and consequently, that as in the government of masters, its claim to obedience is not established by force but by law. The *jus divinum*‡ of governments, when rationally explained, can only mean that lawful governments have a right to demand the obedience of the subjects, and that it is the will of God that the subjects should submit to their authority. "The divine right of kings," says Paley, "like the divine right of constables, is founded on the law of the land."

There is a considerable difficulty in determining how far the moral obligation of submission extends, because cases may be supposod and questions may be put, with respect to which it is not easy to come to a satisfactory and consistent conclusion. In general it may be said, that no government is lawful which does not exist with the formal or virtual consent of the people. The world has been so long accustomed to look upon civil government as independent of the people, and the notion of legitimacy, as attached to a particular form and a particular family, has been so carefully instilled into their minds, that they are slowly brought to assent to what appears one of the plainest propositions, that a despotic government is an usurpation. Farther, the obedience of subjects is defined by the laws of the land. No man is morally bound to submit to the arbitrary will of an individual, because be is called a king any more than because he is called a master, or to the will of a lawful magistrate when he orders any thing contrary to the law of the land. The moment he steps beyond the boundary of law, he loses his official character, and becomes a private man or a tyrant. Lastly, the obedience of subjects, like that of servants, is restrained by the law of God. When civil rulers presume to command what he has forbidden, or to forbid what he has commanded, they become rebels against the King of kings, and have no claim to our homage.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."* These words have been understood to favour passive obedience, but in my opinion they have been grossly perverted. How could any man in his senses suppose, that a messenger of truth would teach us to submit tamely to be plundered, and tormented, and destroyed, by persons who, with the titles of royalty, were worse than common robbers and murderers; to surrender to them all that is dear to us as men, all that renders life worth preserving; to abstain from making a single effort to secure to ourselves, and our friends, and our country, the blessings of liberty and equal laws? Is it to be supposed that the God of justice and beneficence has commissioned a few ruffians to pillage and oppress their fellow creatures, and called upon the latter, under pain of his displeasure, to submit like lambs to the butcher's knife? No; we will make no such supposition, any more than we will suppose that he has forbidden us to use means to stop the ravages of fire, pestilence, or flood, or to employ force to restrain and punish the private ruffians, who with a title equally good, attempt to rob us of our property or our lives. In the passage quoted, the Apostle, without referring to any existing government, or any form in preference to another, lays down the general duty of Christians to their superiors in the state. They are bound to submit; but that it is not blind submission is evident from the reason assigned: "For rulers are not a terror to the good, but to the evil." Again, "he is the minister of God to thee for good."† So far, then, as a government patronizes good works, and punishes such as are evil, so far as it answers the end of its institution by maintaining order and peace in civil society, it is entitled to submission; but when, instead of protecting, it oppresses the people, we can be no more bound in conscience to recognize it as lawful, than we are to acknowledge as a minister of Christ, the man who teaches error in doctrine, and licentiousness in practice.

The duty of subjects is to obey "every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," to "render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour."‡ The duty of civil rulers is to enact just laws, and to execute them impartially; to be the guardian of the rights of their subjects, to maintain order and peace, to patronize arts and sciences, to encourage virtue and discourage vice, so far as their lawful influence extends; to be the fathers of their people, and thus merit their respect and willing obedience.

The duties of the members of the church to those who are over them in the Lord, and the duties which the latter should perform, might be here introduced; but they are so well known, as to render a detail of them unnecessary.

The precept now before us, is called "the first com-

* Col. iii. 22, 23. † 1 Pet. ii. 13. ‡ Divine right.

* Rom. xiii. 1, 2. † Ib. 3, 4. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 13. Rom. xiii 7.

mandment with promise;"* that is, the first in the second table of the law. The promise is contained in these words: "That thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." It is better, I think, to consider this promise as peculiar to the Jewish dispensation, than to attempt to transfer it to the Christian. The law promulgated from Sinai was enforced by temporal rewards, among which long life in Canaan is here held out as the recompense of those who should duly honour their father and mother. It does not appear from the present history of Providence, that the promise is applicable to other countries and nations. Of this our Church seems to have been sensible, when it called it "a promise of long life and prosperity, as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good, to all such as keep this commandment."† This is, in other words, to say, that the keepers of it will live long or not as God shall determine, and, consequently, to acknowledge that the promise is not now attached to the precept. The attempts which have been made to show that the promise is still in force, are unsatisfactory, and usually sum up the matter in the same indeterminate manner with our catechism.

The Sixth commandment is, "Thou shalt not kill." Its design is to guard human life against violence, to render it a sacred thing, which is not to be touched but by Him whose gift it is, and who has a right to resume it at his pleasure. A distinction is made between it and the life of the lower animals, in one of the precepts delivered to Noah. Man holds a higher rank in the scale of being; his life is therefore of much greater value, and to take it unjustly away is a crime which ought not to pass with impunity. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man."‡

It is plain from the words now quoted, and from other passages of Scripture, that, although the precept is absolute, it is subject to certain limitations. It does not forbid the taking away of the life of a man who has forfeited it by his crimes. The murderer may be put to death; and, by the law of Moses, the same punishment was inflicted upon other transgressors. It is generally agreed that murder should be subjected to a capital punishment; but many doubts have been expressed whether it should be extended to any other offence. The reasoning, indeed, which some employ, goes to abolish all capital punishments; for if the power of civil rulers consists in the surrender which their subjects have made of a portion of their rights for the preservation of the rest, and if no man has such power over his own life as to commit it to the disposal of another, it follows that the jurisdiction of magistrates does not reach the life of their subjects, and is confined to what may affect their personal liberty, their property, and, in general, their state in society. This question is not now before us; nor the question, what end human governments propose by the infliction of punishment, whether they are intended as retributions, or merely as examples *in terrorem*.

The precept does not forbid the taking away of life in self-defence. When a man is attacked, he is at liberty to defend himself; and if in the conflict the intended murderer shall fall, no moralist would say the defender was guilty of murder, provided that no means of saving himself were left but the taking away of the life of the aggressor. Surely he was not bound to be more careful of the life of his enemy than of his own. In such a case, the law can afford him no protection; he must use the power which God has given him, to preserve the most valuable of all his possessions, to ward off an injury which can never be repaired. Human laws accord the same right in defence of our property, when an attempt is made to take it from us by violence.

It may be inquired, how far wars, in the course of which there is a loss of many lives, are consistent with this precept? The plain answer is, that they are justifiable only on the plea of self-defence; that we may make war and destroy our enemies when we are unjustly attacked, for we are acting the same part, on a more extended scale, with the individual who resists the house-breaker, the highway-man, and the assassin; but that wars of aggression, wars which have no just cause in the conduct of our antagonist, are unlawful; and that, in the sight of God, every life which is taken away in the prosecution of them is a murder. How much guilt is accumulated upon all the nations of the world! and how dreadful will be the reckoning with the rulers of the earth, when God shall make inquiry after blood!

The precept is justly understood to forbid suicide; and for this reason, that we have not absolute power over our own life, but are bound to retain and employ it to the ends for which it was bestowed, till the gift is resumed by the Giver. Disgust at life will not justify self-murder, because it can exist only in an ungrateful and vicious mind; nor severe affliction, which coming from the hand of God, it is our duty to bear with patience; nor the apprehension of evil, which may not befall us, and to which, if it did come, we should be bound to submit without a murmur. Life is an appointed time, measured out to us by the wisdom of God; it is a race which we must run till we arrive at the goal; it is a conflict which we must sustain till we have obtained the victory.

The prohibition of murder implies a prohibition of all the causes which lead to it; as, envy, malice, revenge, secret wishes of evil to others, and imprecations of it, unjust and excessive anger, duels, and fighting of every kind between man and man. "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not kill: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire."* An Apostle, speaking in the spirit of his Master, declares, that he who "hateth his brother is a murderer."† The command, not to take away our own life, binds us to avoid not only direct suicide, but every thing which has a tendency to bring it to an untimely end; as, peevishness, and fretfulness, and discontent; immoderate grief; anxious care about our wordly affairs, and labour unnecessarily submitted to beyond our strength; neglect of our bodies, by withholding due nourishment and clothing, and carelessness about our health; intemperance in eating and drinking, and exposing ourselves to danger without a lawful call.

The positive duties are implied in the negative. We ought to use all proper means of preserving our life, for our own sakes, and for the good of those who are dependent upon us, and to whom we may be useful in temporal and spiritual things. We are bound also to endeavour to preserve the lives of others, by warning them of dangers, by rescuing them from perilous circumstances, by ministering to their necessities, by doing what will contribute to render life desirable and comfortable to them.

As there is a life of far greater importance than that of the body, the precept may be understood to comprehend the duties which relate to the salvation of our own souls, and those of our brethren: "He that findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death."‡ In these words our duty to ourselves is pointed out; and with respect to others who are connected with us, it is only when we endeavour, by our instructions, our example, and

* Eph. vi. 2. † Short. Cat. Q. 66. ‡ Gen. ix. 6.

* Matth. v. 21, 22. † 1 John iii. 15. ‡ Prov. viii. 36.

our prayers, to turn them from the path of destruction, that we may say with Paul, that "we are free from the blood of all men."

LECTURE CV.

ON THE LAW OF GOD.

Commentary on the Seventh, the Eighth, the Ninth, and the Tenth Commandments.—Conclusion from a Review of the Law.

THE Seventh precept is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." As it forbids a sin which can be committed only by married persons, and according to the rules laid down for the interpretation of the law, not only forbids all the sins comprehended under this general term, but enjoins the opposite duties; a detail of the duties of the conjugal relation is more properly introduced in this place, than under the fifth commandment, to which they are commonly referred.

Marriage is an ordinance of God for the increase of the human race, and for other important purposes connected with the comfort and moral improvement of the species. It was instituted in Paradise, where our first parents were united as husband and wife by their Creator himself, and an example was given to be imitated by their descendants. As such it was considered by Adam, who, instructed no doubt by a divine revelation, said on that occasion, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."*

As only a single pair was created, it appears to have been the intention of their Maker that a man should have only one wife, and a wife only one husband. In this manner Malachi explains the fact, when he says, "And did not he make one?" namely, one woman; "yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? that he might seek a godly seed."† Yet we know that polygamy was introduced at an early period, that it was practised by the patriarchs and other pious men, and that it was recognized by the law of Moses, and subjected to regulation. If it was not properly approved, it was tolerated; and we must conclude, that at that period there was not such moral evil in it, if it was at all sinful, as was inconsistent with a state of salvation. The case is finally decided by our Saviour, who has forbidden polygamy. It now admits of no apology; and if a man, professing to be a Christian, should take to himself more wives than one, he would not only incur the penalty of human laws, but expose himself to the displeasure of heaven.

Marriage is the union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. It is founded on mutual consent, and binds the parties to each other for life. As the relation is of great importance, not only to the individuals, but to society at large, the civil laws have taken it under their cognizance, and prescribed the forms which are necessary to legalize the transaction. This precaution has not been neglected in our own country; but the matter is still left too loose, as consent expressed before witnesses, or even, I believe, in writing, is sufficient to constitute marriage. When the laws have settled the forms, the observance of them becomes indispensable; and as marriage, although a divine institution, is at the same time a civil transaction, a marriage, in contracting which they have been neglected, is not legal and cannot be considered as valid.

Marriage is not a temporary contract, like that between master and servant, but a union of a man and woman for life. They cannot separate at their pleasure or at the expiration of a definite period. They are bound to adhere to each other during the term of their natural lives, and neither of them is at liberty to enter into a new engagement, without an offence against the law both of God and man. There is one cause, however, which may terminate the relation during their lifetime, namely, the sin forbidden in this commandment. Adultery, whether committed by the husband or by the wife, is a just ground of divorce. It is a direct violation of the marriage vow, giving the aggrieved party a right to demand the dissolution of an engagement which the other has broken, by retracting the pledge solemnly given at its commencement. You will observe, however, that adultery does not *ipso facto* dissolve the conjugal relation; it only invests the sufferer with a right to demand the dissolution of it from the competent authority; if the wife or the husband does not choose to exercise the right, things remain as they were. Another cause which, in this country but not in England, is considered as sufficient to procure the dissolution of the conjugal tie, is the wilful desertion of one of the parties, which means as our law has defined it, the absence of one of the parties for a specified time without any lawful cause. If a man should be absent from his wife for many years on business, or because he was forcibly detained, or rendered incapable of returning, the wife would have no plea for a divorce. Our Saviour has taken no notice of this cause when speaking of the subject; but it is supposed to be countenanced by these words of Paul: "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases."* As wilful desertion not only implies alienation of affection, but defeats all the designs of marriage, it seems to entitle the injured party to be released from an obligation which the other has violated, and which now serves only as a restraint upon the natural liberty of the innocent.

This precept addresses married persons in the first instance, and forbids the violation of the fidelity which they pledged to each other when they entered into the conjugal relation. It requires mutual affection, cohabitation, the faithful performance of their duty, the avoidance of all temptations to sin, and of all means leading to it, and such care of one another as shall prove effectual, through the blessing of God, to preserve them pure and blameless.

Under the head of adultery, all the kindred sins are forbidden. I may specify, in the first place, fornication, or the illicit intercourse of two unmarried persons of different sexes. The enormity of this crime might be shown from the state of the mind which it implies, and from its consequences; but it is enough in this rapid sketch to remark, that it is expressly forbidden as inconsistent with moral purity, and offensive to God. Among the heathens, it was looked upon as a venial sin, or rather as no sin at all, and it was countenanced by the doctrine and practice of their greatest philosophers. This is probably the reason that, in the decree of the council of Jerusalem, it is mentioned along with some other things of less importance, from which the Gentiles were commanded to abstain.†

This precept also forbids incest or sexual intercourse between persons within the forbidden degrees, as between brothers and sisters, uncles and nieces, &c. According to the laws of our country, the prohibition is extended to the corresponding degrees of affinity.

It forbids unnatural lusts, which were practised by the heathens without shame, and defended, or at least not condemned, by such a man as Socrates, but which are now of rare occurrence, and always excite unqualified abhorrence.

* Gen. ii. 24. † Mal. ii. 15.

* 1 Cor. vii. 12, 13, 15. † Acts xv. 29.

It forbids, in a word, all impure actions, all impure words, and all impure thoughts, as sinful in themselves, and as leading to sin. This is our Lord's commentary upon the law: "Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."*

The precept requires us to maintain our own and our neighbour's chastity in heart, speech and behaviour; to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. With this view, we should cultivate an habitual sense of the Divine presence, which enabled Joseph to preserve his innocence, when he was exposed to very powerful solicitations: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"† It will be well to remember that his eye is upon us in the most secret place: that the fear of offending him may counteract the most urgent temptation, and check the irregular movements of our hearts. This leads me to say, in the next place, that we should guard against the entrance of evil thoughts into our minds, and immediately expel them if they have entered, and should labour to suppress the risings of unhallowed appetite. He who rolls iniquity like a sweet morsel under his tongue, is prepared to commit it if a fit opportunity shall occur, and Providence shall withdraw its restraints. The man who sports with temptation, and quietly permits or encourages its first advances, is in danger of ultimately yielding to it. The most effectual method to prevent the growth of poisonous fruit, is to destroy the root which bears it.—Again, we should guard against all incentives to those indulgences which are forbidden by this precept, all spectacles which are calculated to excite the irregular movements of appetite, all reading and conversation which may produce the same effect. We should avoid loose and profligate company, whose words and example might taint our minds; we should avoid idleness, which, leaving the mind vacant, exposes it to the inroads of unhallowed sentiments and passions; we should avoid intemperance in eating and drinking, than which nothing is more likely to give appetite the mastery over reason. In a word, we should live in the contemplation of death and the future judgment, and the awful realities of eternity, a just apprehension of which will divest the pleasures of sense of their attractions; and continually offer up our prayers to God for his restraining and sanctifying grace, without which our precautions and resolutions will be unavailing. "Wherewithal shall a young man purify his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word;"‡ by making the word his guide, and depending upon the assistance which it promises. "My son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."‖ "Once," says Paul to the Corinthians, "ye were adulterers, fornicators, and abusers of yourselves with mankind; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."§

The Eighth commandment is, "Thou shalt not steal;" and the design of it is to guard property against fraud and open violence. It places a sacred inclosure around it, into which no person must enter without the consent of the proprietor.

It is unnecessary to engage in an inquiry respecting the manner in which property is acquired. The subject has been discussed by philosophers, and different theories have been proposed and defended. It has been said to have originated in the right of occupancy, or, that he who first took possession of a part of the common field of nature, became its rightful proprietor. It has been founded on the right of labour, that is, it has been supposed that a man, by cultivating a part of the soil, was entitled to claim not only the produce but the soil, as his own. It has been referred to the will of God, who, having created all things for the use of man, gave liberty to every individual to appropriate to himself what was necessary for the supply of his wants. Without troubling ourselves to discuss these theories we may remark that, in a state of society, property is ascertained by the law of the land. As it points out the various ways in which it may be acquired, and secures it to the rightful possessor, so it determines in all controversies which arise between two or more individuals, who is the rightful owner of a field, a house, money, &c. The sin which the precept forbids is the appropriation to ourselves, by our own act, of that which we know belongs to another. A man would not be chargeable with transgressing it, who should seize another man's property, believing it to be his own, and should endeavour to establish his claim to it at law; although his right was not good, his intentions would not be dishonest. But he is a transgressor, who takes what he knows to belong to another man; and although he have attained the sanction of law by such acts as the unprincipled too often employ, he is a thief or a robber in the estimation of God.

Theft is distinguished into different kinds. There is peculation, or theft of the public money, a crime often committed, and by persons who pass in the world for honourable men, and look down with ineffable contempt upon the obscure culprit, who practises his depredations upon a confined scale. There is sacrilege, or theft of the property of the church or of any thing devoted to the service of God. This crime is comparatively rare, partly because the temptations to it are neither frequent nor great, partly because men are restrained by a sense of religion, and partly because it would cover the guilty with indelible infamy. There is common theft which is practised daily; and at present abounds to such a degree as to render property extremely insecure. Robbery differs from theft in the manner of committing it. The one is secret and the other open; and robbery is accompanied with violence threatened, or actually employed, to compel a surrender, or to overcome resistance.—All those crimes are forbidden, and they are violations of the laws of God and man. The precept condemns the man of office who fills his purse out of the public treasury, and places him on a level in respect of moral guilt, if it do not degrade him still lower, with the contemptible wretch who goes from house to house pilfering whatever he can find. It condemns neighbours who steal from one another, servants who purloin the goods of their masters, and children who secrete for their own use the property of their parents.

Besides what is commonly reputed theft, there are various other ways in which men may be guilty of transgressing this commandment. It is broken when a man borrows and does not repay. His dishonesty is manifest if he denies the debt, or refuses to make restoration, or takes advantage of some legal quirk to evade payment, or to remove to a place where he is beyond the reach of his creditors. But he is also dishonest if he borrows without any reasonable prospect of being able to pay; if he render himself unable by idleness, by extravagant living, by rash speculations, in which he has embarked the property of others as well as his own; or if, having obtained a discharge after partial payment, he does not make full restitution when Providence has placed him in prosperous circumstances. The commandment is broken by the deceitful arts which are practised in trade; when a man takes advantage of the necessity of another to buy from him or sell to him, at a price which would have been different in different circumstances, or when he takes advantage of his ignorance with the same design; when the buyer depreciates the article of sale contrary to his knowledge, and the seller labours to raise it above its real value; when goods are adulterated, and

* Matth. v. 28. † Gen. xxxix. 9. ‡ Ps. cxix. 9.
‖ 2 Tim. ii. 1. § 1 Cor. vi. 9, 11.

consequently sold at a price which they would not have brought if their state had been known; when false weights and measures are used, and less is given in exchange than was expected and promised; when bargains are not fulfilled, because there is a prospect of greater gain, and so what really belongs to the purchaser, although he had not obtained actual possession of it, is withheld from him; when payments are made in counterfeit or debased instead of current coin; in all these cases, the precept is as certainly violated, as when direct theft is committed. It is broken, too, when men waste the property of others which is committed to their care, or permit it to be wasted by others; when they suffer it to go to decay, and do not use the means of improving it which are in their power, and which they were bound by their engagements to employ. In this way many are guilty of a breach of the eighth commandment, who do not suspect their own honesty, and would consider themselves insulted, if it were called in question by others. There are many other ways of transgressing this commandment, which it would be tedious to mention.

The duty of those who are guilty, in any form, is to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well. "Let him that stole, steal no more;"* let him make restitution as far as he has ability and opportunity; and let him guard against temptation to a repetition of the crime, and against all the causes which might lead to it. Besides entertaining an habitual sense of the omniscience and authority of God, which would be an effectual restraint from all sin, let him study to be content with his condition; and if it is attended with inconveniences and privations, let him consider that these are allotted to him by the Supreme Disposer, that it is his duty to suffer with patience, and that he will not be an ultimate gainer by resorting to unlawful expedients for relief. Instead of appropriating to himself any portion of his neighbour's wealth, he ought to regard it as placed within the fence of the Divine law, and feel that he is bound to promote his neighbour's interest by all means in his power, for this is the converse of the negative precept. There are different ways in which this work of love may be performed, as by assisting others in their labours, when attention to our own business will permit; by giving them lessons of prudence and economy; by pointing out to them the best methods of managing their affairs; by warning them of dangers which they do not foresee; and if we are precluded from using any of these means, we always have it in our power to wish them well, and to pray for their prosperity.

"Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good."† If a man has not resources of his own, he must endeavour to provide them by lawful industry, and thus cut off one strong temptation to theft. The crime is most frequently committed by the poor, who cannot work for their daily bread; or by the idle, who will not work, and take this easier method of supplying their wants. Hence it follows that diligence in business is enjoined by this precept. The calling in which we engage must be lawful, because the gain which is acquired by an illicit occupation, is the fruit of a violation either of this or some other commandment, and cannot be sought with a good conscience. It must be carried on by lawful means, by fair and honest industry, to the exclusion of falsehood and fraud, and any encroachment upon the rights and privileges of others. It should be managed with attention, and prudence, and perseverance, because it is only by the use of these means that we can reasonably calculate upon success; but moderation should be observed, not only lest our strength be impaired, and life abridged, but that we may not contract an undue attachment to the world, and, by fostering the principle of avarice, create a new temptation to dishonesty. The cultivation of spirituality and heavenliness of mind will be an effectual means of subduing covetousness, and preventing the evils which spring from it; for, if we are seeking the true riches, and are fully aware of the vanity of earthly things, we shall be in little danger of going out of the path of duty to obtain them.

Even upon those who cannot work, and are destitute of daily bread, this precept is binding. In an extreme case, moralists have allowed that a man may take as much of a neighbour's property as is necessary to preserve him from perishing of hunger or cold, and assign this reason, that "when property was first established, the institution was not intended to operate to the destruction of any; and therefore, when such consequence would follow, all regard to it is superseded." Be this as it may, the source to which the poor are to look is the charity of others, which they may solicit, but cannot compel, for this is one of those rights which moralists call imperfect, because they cannot be enforced in the course of law. I am speaking of voluntary charity, and not of legal assessments. Their right to charity, however, is perfect by the law of God, who peremptorily enjoins alms, and will punish those who, from inhumanity or selfishness, withhold them. Besides a sense of duty, which should excite us to relieve our indigent brethren, and in aid of which comes the sentiment of compassion towards the sufferers, every man should consider that this is one of the ways in which we may expect our temporal affairs to prosper; for "he that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again." "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."*

I now proceed to the Ninth commandment. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." The sin which is expressly forbidden is, the giving of false testimony concerning a person when we are summoned as witnesses in his cause by proper authority. This is done when we affirm that to be true, which we know to be false; when we assert as certain what is doubtful; when we give a higher colouring or a deeper shade to a transaction, than is consistent with fact; when we deliberately conceal any thing which would serve to establish the innocence or the guilt of our neighbour. In these and other ways, witnesses may swerve from the truth; and as their evidence, in a judicial trial, is given upon oath, they farther incur the guilt of perjury: "These are the things that ye shall do, Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates."†

But, although the violation of truth in the solemn proceedings of courts is the only sin specified, yet all other sins allied to it, and contrary to the general principle inculcated, are forbidden. We must not bear false witness against our neighbour in common conversation. We must not charge him with a crime of which we know him to be innocent, or pronounce him to be guilty upon reports which we have not verified; we must not form rash judgments of conduct which, upon inquiry, may be found to be right, although appearances at first were unfavourable; we must not impute bad motives to him without sufficient evidence, when there is room for a more charitable interpretation. By this precept, all those are condemned who are called calumniators, slanderers, backbiters, whisperers, evil surmisers; the authors and propagators of injurious reports; those whose business it is to detract from merit, to throw a shade upon excellence, and to make virtue suspected; who, as the thief goes from place

* Eph. iv. 28. † Eph. iv. 28.

* Prov. xix. 17. xi. 24. † Zech. viii. 16.

to place in search of prey, roam about with the nefarious design to commit depredations upon the characters of others. We may violate this precept even when we speak the truth, if we speak it unseasonably, unnecessarily, and from improper motives. We injure the character of our neighbour when we retail his real faults without any call to divulge them; when we relate them to those who have no right to know them; and when we tell them, not to promote any good end, but to make him lose his estimation in society. Many think that they are perfectly blameless if they adhere strictly to truth, not considering that, to a complete moral action, more is necessary than its external conformity to the rule, and that the principle in which it originated may be so vitiated as to convert the action into a sin. Nay, we may transgress this precept when we do not speak at all; for, by holding our peace when something injurious is said of another, we tacitly give our assent, and, by concealing what we know to the contrary, by not bringing forward what would rebut the charge, we become guilty not in a much inferior degree to the first contriver of the calumny. We certainly do not fulfil the law, which says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The design of this precept is to "maintain and promote truth between man and man." Our organs of speech were given for the purpose of expressing it. It is evident that this must have been the design of our Creator, whose ultimate object in subordination to his own glory, was good, to be accomplished by the structure of our bodies, and the constitution of our minds. Without truth there could be no society among men, no friendships, no mutual co-operation, no transactions of any kind; they would be filled with jealousy and distrust, and be reduced to a helpless individuality of existence, destitute of all comfort, and harassed with perpetual suspicion and alarm. To guard against these consequences, God has planted two principles in human nature,—an instinctive propensity to speak truth, and an instinctive disposition to believe testimony. The former may seem to be inconsistent with the declaration of Scripture, that "the wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."* These words do, indeed, import that there is a proneness to duplicity and deceit in human nature, of which there are indications at a very early period; but it is called into action only by particular circumstances, and in general children and fools are proverbial for speaking truth. Truth comes spontaneously from our lips, when there is no motive to utter falsehood; and so strong is the natural connexion between our sentiments and our words, that it frequently escapes from us when it would be our interest to conceal it. Men commonly speak truth, and lie only occasionally. The disposition to give credit to testimony presupposes the former propensity; it assumes that truth is generally spoken; it is strongest prior to experience of deceit, and becomes suspicious and cautious in proportion as that experience is acquired.

But although there is a natural propensity to speak truth, when it is not counteracted by any improper influence, men in their degenerate state do not feel so sacred a regard to it as is sufficient to secure them against temptation. There are frequent violations of it from various causes, against which this precept is directed. Truth may be defined to be the conformity of our sentiments to the nature of things, and the conformity of our words to our sentiments. The precept immediately regards the latter, but not to the exclusion of the former. If it is our duty not to deceive others, it is our duty to take care that we be not ourselves deceived; and consequently, to make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with a subject before we venture to speak of it. But when a man speaks as he thinks, he speaks moral truth; and although he should be mistaken, he is not guilty of a lie.

Lies are commonly distinguished into three kinds. First, There are malicious or pernicious lies, or lies the design of which is to do mischief. These are universally condemned. Secondly, There are jocose lies, or lies told for the purpose of amusement and merriment. However common these are, and however lightly they are thought of, a strict moralist will condemn them also, because truth is too sacred to be trifled with. Thirdly, There are officious lies, which are so called, because they are intended to promote the benefit of others. It has been pleaded as an apology for these, that they do no harm, but on the contrary do good; a conscience duly informed, however, does not judge of the morality of an action by its consequences, but by the law; and to do evil that good may come, is a principle which the Scripture has proscribed. Under the same censure are included pious frauds, as they are called, and which began to be practised at an early period; lies told, miracles feigned, books forged, and sophistical reasoning deliberately employed, to advance the cause of religion. Equivocation is another species of falsehood, and consists in the studied use of terms which bear two different senses, in one of which the speaker understands them, while he means them to be understood in the other by the person addressed. He violates truth, because he intends to deceive. It is violated also by mental reservation, which has been justified by Popish casuists, but deserves universal execration, because it subverts all faith and confidence between man and man. It consists in uttering so many words aloud, and then muttering or mentally repeating some more which totally alter their meaning, than which it is impossible to conceive a more deliberate and baser attempt to deceive.

Every man has not a right to hear the truth when he chooses to demand it. We are not bound to answer every question which may be proposed to us. In such cases we may be silent, or we may give as much information as we please, and suppress the rest. If the person afterwards discover that the information was partial, he has no title to complain, because he had not a right even to what he obtained; and we are not guilty of a falsehood, unless we made him believe, by something which we said, that the information was complete. We are at liberty to put off with an evasive answer the man who attempts to draw from us what we ought to conceal. On the ground of the want of a right to truth, some justify false information given to an assassin who is in quest of his intended victim, and false promises made to a robber or a tyrant who has extorted them by violence. It does not serve much purpose to discuss extreme cases, which rarely occur; and it is hazardous to lay down a rule which may in any degree lessen our reverence for truth. We have a choice, when we are exposed to danger, either to sin or to suffer; and if there be any doubt with respect to the lawfulness of an expedient, every man of a tender conscience will take the safer side, by doing what appears to be his duty, and will leave the consequences to Providence.

There can be no doubt that promises voluntarily made and properly qualified are binding. They are binding, according to the sense in which they were understood by the parties at the time when they were made,—binding, in the plain and natural meaning of the terms. But promises are not binding when the performance of them is impossible. This is so obvious as to require no illustration; but it is proper to observe, that the impossibility must have arisen or been discovered after the promise was made; and if the promiser was aware of it at the time, he excited false expectations, and is clearly guilty of a lie. Promises are not binding when the performance would be

* Ps. lviii. 3.

unlawful. A prior cannot be set aside by a subsequent obligation; and the law of God undoubtedly does not require us to fulfil an engagement by which any of its precepts would be transgressed. A promise is not binding unless it has been accepted. It is the acceptance which constitutes the obligation, and not the simple promise, which is merely a declaration on the part of the promiser of his willingness to be bound. If I promised to give another a certain sum of money, but he declared that he would not accept of it, I am released. A promise is not binding which was suspended upon a condition, if the condition is not performed. The promiser has lost his right, or rather had no right till his part of the stipulation was fulfilled. In a word, a promise ceases to be binding, when the person to whom it was made releases the promiser from his bond.

The duty enjoined in this precept is, to adhere to truth on all occasions. There are some cases, indeed, in which, although our words, literally understood, do not agree with our sentiments, we do not incur the guilt of falsehood, as in irony, parables, and fictitious narratives; and the reason is, that as we do not intend to deceive, so no person is deceived. The design of the speaker or writer is understood. No man mistakes a romance or a parable for a true history, or supposes irony to be any other thing than a mode of conveying censure under the semblance of praise. But in testimony, in common conversation, and in more formal declarations, our words should be the exact image of our thoughts. It is the character of the man who shall abide in the tabernacle of God, that "he speaketh the truth in his heart."*

It remains that we should briefly consider the Tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." The direct object of this precept is not our external actions, but the movements of the heart; and hence it appears to be supplementary and auxiliary to the other commandments. They also must be understood to regard our feelings and affections, because they proceeded from him who will not be satisfied with outward obedience; but lest men should not have perceived their extent, and should have pleaded that, in conforming to the letter of the law, they had fulfilled its demands, this precept is added to show its spirituality. The seventh command forbids adultery; but here we find that something more is required than abstinence from the forbidden act, and that the commandment may be transgressed in the heart: "Thou shalt not covet or desire thy neighbour's wife." The eighth commandment forbids us to steal; but this precept shows that the man who would scorn to purloin the property of another, may become criminal in the sight of God by desiring it: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, nor his ox, nor his ass." By forbidding us to desire any thing that belongs to him, it forbids every improper sentiment and feeling excited by the state of his affairs, as envy, rivalship, contests for superiority; and thus aims at eradicating the principle which might lead us to injure him in his person, his character, or any of his rights. It is the safe-guard of all the precepts of the second table; and it comes in at the close, to remind us that the heart must be pure as well as the life.

It is a celebrated and important question in theology, whether what is called in Greek ἐπιθυμία, in Latin *concupiscentia*, and in English *concupiscence*, or *desire*, has the nature of sin. Concupiscence is used in different senses. In the first place, It signifies that proneness to evil which is natural to man, and is found even in the regenerated. This the Church of Rome acknowledges to be the matter of sin, or that in which sin originates; but denies it to be sin, and says, that although the Apostle Paul calls it sin, it is not so in itself, but is so denominated, because it inclines to sin. I think, however, that we are much safer in following Paul than the Council of Trent. We cannot conceive any proneness, or tendency, or inclination to evil, in a perfectly innocent being; or such to have been the constitution of human nature, when it was first impressed with the image of its Maker. Although capable of evil, it was inclined only to good. An inclination to evil must be itself evil, as an inclination to virtue is a virtuous tendency; and the rule of our Saviour certainly holds in the present case, that the tree is corrupt which bears corrupt fruit. In the second place, Concupiscence signifies the involuntary movements of this habitual disposition; and they are called involuntary, because they are not accompanied with any deliberate act of the mind approving of them and consenting to them, but arise suddenly, in consequence of the presence of a suitable object. These also have been denied to be sinful; but although they do not imply a formal deliberate volition, yet, as they proceed from an evil habit, they must themselves be evil. It will be acknowledged, I presume, that it is our duty to check them; but how could this be, if they were innocent? We can conceive no such thing in our Lord; and every motion of this kind is excluded by his own declaration, that "the prince of this world was coming, but would find nothing in him;"* no tendency towards sin, no movement of the affections, of which he could take advantage to seduce him. Lastly, Concupiscence signifies fixed, voluntary desire of what is forbidden, which all admit to be sinful.

The latter, therefore, is forbidden in this precept, "Thou shalt not covet, or desire." But it extends farther, and forbids the incipient desire, even before it has obtained the consent of the mind, and consequently the previous state of mind in which it originated; for if the tendency in act be condemned, the tendency in habit is also condemned. The Apostle Paul says, "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."† We cannot suppose him to mean, that he did not know that the deliberate desire of a sinful object was sinful, although there is reason to think that some of the Jewish Doctors of that age made obedience to consist merely in external conformity to the law; yet it is hardly credible that a man who had studied the law so diligently, had entirely over-looked all the notices of its spirituality, and particularly the principle upon which it is founded—love to God and to man. It is probable, that in the passage before us, he refers to the first motions of sin, those involuntary acts of concupiscence of which we have spoken, and declares that it was only by this precept that he came to know them to be sinful. It was when the precept was brought home to his conscience by the Spirit of God, that he made this discovery. Till then, he had believed that all was right as long as he was free from outward sin, or, at least, from the settled and deliberate desire of what was evil.

This precept teaches us how we ought to be affected towards our neighbour. As we should abstain from an open invasion of his rights, so we should harbour no uncharitable disposition towards him, no wish which is at variance with his happiness, and would lead us to encroach upon his honour, and property, and peace. It condemns all dissatisfaction with our lot; and all intentions, as well as endeavours, to change it by any means inconsistent with justice and love to our neighbour, and with entire submission to the will of God.

* Ps. xv. 2.

* John xiv. 30. † Rom. vii. 7.

Contentment with our own condition, is obviously a duty which it enjoins. The reason that we covet the things which belong to our neighbour, is, that we are not fully pleased with the portion which God has assigned to us. A contented state of mind would remove the cause of these irregular affections, which it is the design of this precept to restrain. We see that vanity sometimes produces the effect which should flow solely from religion. Some persons are highly pleased with themselves, and every thing which pertains to them. Their houses, their wives, their children, their property, are so much better than those of others, that they have no wish to make an exchange; and, wrapt up in the dream of superiority, they allow the world to go on in its course, without envying any one, or disturbing any one, except by an ostentatious display of their advantages. This example shows how true contentment, founded on submission to the will of God, would preserve us from transgressing this commandment. If we believed that our condition is such as it ought to be, that it has been arranged by Divine wisdom, and is over-ruled by Divine goodness for our best interests, we should not be grieved at the greater prosperity of others, nor wish to appropriate to our own use any thing which they possess. We should even be pleased with what was our own, and leave others to enjoy undisturbed what God had given to them. The tendency of this precept is to promote the happiness of mankind, as well as the glory of God. If it were engraven upon our hearts, if our thoughts and affections were under its control, there would be an end to the complaints and murmurs, the cares and anxieties, which agitate our minds; and the world would no longer present the disgusting spectacle of a field of battle, where emulation, wrath, strife, deceit, and violence, act their part, men prey upon one another, and all contend who shall be conquerors in the struggle for honour and wealth.

Upon the whole, we see that the moral law is in every respect worthy of its Author. It bears upon it an impression of his holiness: it is adapted to the nature of man; it holds all his faculties in subjection to his Maker, and its aim is to promote piety, and purity, and love.

When we reflect upon the extensive nature of its demands, the spirituality of its precepts, its condemnation of even an irregular thought, its requisition of entire and constant submission to God, of an habitual reference to his will as our rule, and his glory as our end; when we reflect upon the height and depth, the length and breadth of the law, we cannot but be sensible that it is impossible for any man in the present life perfectly to fulfil it. The obedience of the saints is attended with many defects, as they are always ready to acknowledge. "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."* The knowledge of the law is sufficient to convince any person, whatever his former notions may have been, that he cannot be justified by it. Hence there is need of a better righteousness than we can supply; and we have all reason to be thankful that the law has been fulfilled and magnified by our Divine Redeemer, and a foundation has thus been laid for the acceptance and eternal salvation of those who had fallen under the curse. "He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." "As by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."†

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* Eccles. vii. 20. † Rom. x. 4. v. 19.

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